

The Quest
of the
Colonial

Robert and
Elizabeth
Shackleton

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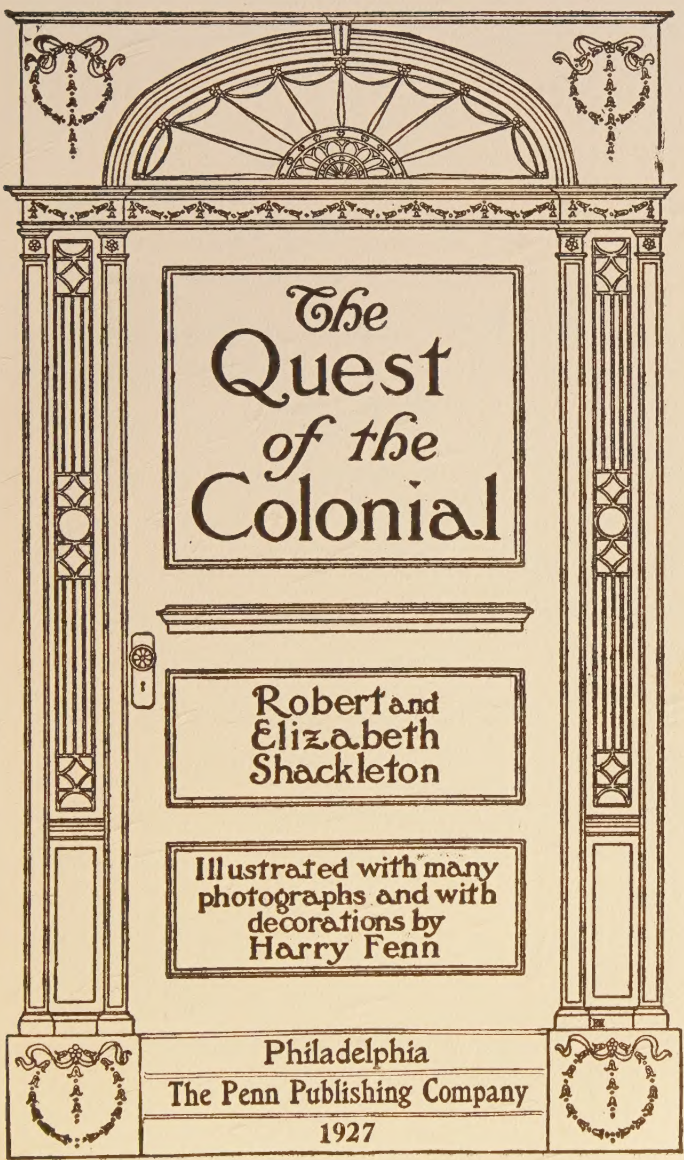
The
Quest of the Colonial



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A "Vendue" or Country Auction in the Forties

The book cover is designed to look like a classical door. At the top is a pediment containing a sunburst or fanlight motif. The door itself is flanked by two columns with decorative panels. The title is in a large, elegant script. Below the title is a horizontal molding, then the authors' names in a smaller script. Below that is another horizontal molding, then a box containing text about illustrations. At the bottom is a base with two decorative scrolls on the sides.

The Quest of the Colonial

Robert and
Elizabeth
Shackleton

Illustrated with many
photographs and with
decorations by
Harry Fenn

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The Quest of the Colonial



The Quest of the Colonial

CHAPTER I

MAKING A BEGINNING

WITH ourselves, the kettle began it! Or was it the first pair of candlesticks! Or the Shaker chair! Rather, it would seem, on looking back upon the gradual inception of the plan, that it was the combined influence of the chair and the candlesticks and the kettle.

The kettle, a charming ebony-handled thing, squat, round, of captivating curves, the body of it made in two parts but with such skill that the brazed edge almost defies detection and there is thus the air of

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having been hammered out of a single sheet, came ancestrally, having crossed the ocean many decades ago.

The candlesticks caught the eye, one day, by a felicitous chance, on the window-ledge of a shop prosaically devoted to the buying and selling of scrap metal. They are nine and a quarter inches high and of excellent design. Indeed, after all these following years of quest and success, they stand honorably among our treasured acquisitions. Very dirty they were, those brasses, in that old-metal window, and the fragments of tallow dip candles were green in their sockets. They were indubitably old as well as graceful, and they were offered and purchased at the price of twenty cents apiece. To be sure, they needed burnishing, but that was but a small matter.

The chair was an acquisition still more delightful in the course of its coming. For there was a Shaker settlement near the city where we used to live, and it was a pleasure to visit there, so hospitable were the kindly aged folk, and amid such an aroma of sweetness did they lead their celibate lives.

We wondered at times, finding them so gently cordial to us, when we knew that the cold text of their religion taught them to be distrustful of people



Candlesticks and Snuffers

1 Brass candlesticks; Delaware. 2 Bought for ten cents; Sheffield plate. 3 Sheffield; classic pillar. 4 Sheffield; rococo. 5 Sheffield pair; concave panels. 6 Brass; old French. 7 The first acquisition; from junk-shop window. 8 Bedroom candlestick. 9 Old snuffers. 10 From old warship.

MAKING A BEGINNING

of the outside world and to hold but necessary communication with them, whether they hoped to draw us in as proselytes for their community, so sorely in need of younger blood; but if they ever cherished the hope that we should find inward and spiritual grace among them they assuredly gave no outward and visible sign that such was their thought. They were hospitable, in a simple, old-fashioned way, and we were welcome to enter their doors, to walk through their halls, with polished floors, covered with long strips of rag carpeting, and with everywhere an odor of herbs and of sanctity; we were welcome at their meals of bread and butter, and fried chicken, and jelly of apple and sauce of pear, when, in silence, the men ate at a long table at one side of the great dining-room and the women, as silent, at the other. Back to back they sat, with the broad space between; and one standing in the middle would have seen, on the one hand, a line of men's heads, bent over the table, a row of blue coats, with tails carefully parted on either side of the low-backed chairs, and, on the other side, a row of little muslin caps, and plain tippets and dresses of calico.

These people, self set apart from the world, showed us the inside corners of their warm hearts; and it seems, looking back upon it, as if the taste for

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the quaint and the old-fashioned, even then strong within us, was strengthened by knowing these folk, who seemed like veritable bits out of the past. They themselves realized that there was something in accord between us, and one of the oldest of the Sisters gave us her own particular chair which had been made specially for her, in her youth, when she taught sewing to the children whom they then had in their school.

It is a slender, narrow rocker, with slim, high back; impossible to rock, indeed, for the dear old lady had found it liable to tip over backward, or to threaten to tip, and so had had one of the Brothers saw off the rockers short and fasten on the stubby ends prohibitive bits of cork. The chair, charmingly proportioned, with low-set arms, has nothing about it that is elaborate; the code of Shakerism allows nothing of display; but it is most carefully made, is splint-bottomed, with a curious variety of Roman-key design, and the ends of the arms and the tops of the side pieces end in delicately ovaled knobs.

The chair stands in a corner of our guest-room, holding in kindly remembrance the kindly folk, hundreds of miles from where we now are, by whom, long ago, we were made welcome guests.

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And so, from the possession of these grew the idea of outfitting our home with the charming and stately furniture of the past, with the mahogany and the walnut, the brass and the china, of the olden time. Even with this beginning, the idea was slowly adopted, with much of hesitating dubiety as to the possibility of it all. For, until we had well begun, the plan seemed so impractical, so impracticable!

This sense of the ultimate futility of the attempt, even after a few delightful acquisitions, was strong within us because of our living in a city of the Middle West, where old-fashioned furniture is, necessarily, far less common than in the Eastern States, but even had we then lived in the East there would have been little encouragement shown us. To see the charming things of long ago is offered with generous freedom, alike in the superb collections of public organizations and in the fine old Colonial mansions, in various States, given into the charge of patriotic societies and filled by them with the furniture of the past. But the line between seeing and acquiring is clearly drawn. Those who show with opulent freedom will only suggest, for purchasing, to go directly and prosaically to the shops where things with claim to age are sold.

But it was no part of our scheme to obtain our

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treasure prosaically or from sources open to any degree of doubt. From the very first we experienced, with the joy of having, the concomitant joy of getting. With our earliest acquisitions, the Shaker chair, the candlesticks and the kettle, there was the tang of some delightful association and the charm of the personal touch, and we were resolved, having delightfully begun, not to be content with methods and results less interesting.

And here, first, is the fact which, little appreciated, lies at the bottom of it all. There is, as yet, no essential scantiness of supply of the delightful and desirable old! There is just enough of scantiness to render the quest alluring.

And it would be strange if there were any prohibitive scantiness. A century ago there were in existence millions of pieces of furniture of the shapes that are now held in admiration. Things that are now the possessions of a few were then the common possession of all. In one single year, near the opening of the century just past, the shop of a single Connecticut maker turned out the movements for three thousand tall clocks. Other things were made in numbers proportionate—tables, chairs, bureaus, andirons, candlesticks. So many were the mechanics engaged in the manufacture of furniture, that the

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trade came to be in some degree specialized, and there were men engaged in nothing but the construction of Windsor chairs!

All of these millions of articles were not destroyed, all were not worn out and thrown away or turned over to museums. An enormous total is still in existence; great numbers of pieces may be sought out and secured by the collector of to-day.

Realizing this—and how few realize it!—it is but a matter of learning where to seek with the greatest prospect of finding.

Although it is in the East that far the greatest number remain in existence, we found that in the Middle West there came many a fine specimen by ox-cart from Connecticut to the shores of Lake Erie; many were flat-boated down the Ohio in the early days of settlement or traileed through Cumberland Gap by the pioneers of Kentucky; and, farther South, many a piece went westward from the Carolinas, or, entering the Mississippi, remained at some point along the river's banks. Although the bulk of furniture remained in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Virginia, or elsewhere near the coast, the early folk of Cleveland and Louisville and St. Louis, of Pittsburg, Cincinnati and New Orleans, were not without old

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treasures. In what was deemed the backwoods there were houses of log or hewed timber in which family silver alternated with gourds, and in which fine mahogany stood on puncheon floors. And, in the West as in the East, during the period that the taste prevailed—the taste which has so strongly revived—additional furniture was made, on the graceful lines of the old, by local cabinet-makers. And outside of the known lines of travel and of settlement, many a piece of fine design has wandered erratically to some most unexpected spot and is waiting to be discovered and appropriated.

Theoretically, there is no reason, except the powerful one that the old was all hand-made, why the furniture of to-day is not fully as beautiful as that of the past. But it is not, any more than the churches of to-day equal the ancient cathedrals. In such cases it is matter of fact, not of theory. The graceful lines and proportions, in furniture, are mainly of a bygone era, save in the cases of successful imitation. And, in addition to the actual grace, the actual beauty, there is the charm of association with an interesting past. The tender grace of a day that is dead lingers about the stately fireirons of the time of Washington or the beautiful chair which was used in a house of Revolutionary fame. The charm once felt, it never disappears.

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There are so many directions in which one may profitably go, in the search of the old, that it must needs be matter for needful planning. By a judicious distribution of vacation trips many a point can be touched. By those of greater leisure there can be any degree of expeditionary meanderings. Often a business trip takes one to a place where a longed-for treasure may be secured.

The quest will be likely to last over years. But it is such an enjoyable quest, in its experiences as well as in its rewards, that one does not wish it to be shorter. Old-time acquisitions can never be very greatly prized if, with a full pocketbook, a visit is made to a dealer and instructions given to outfit the house. It is the personal touch which comes from the personal finding, it is the definite association, it is the knowledge that one knows precisely what, in each case, one is getting, it is the personal adventure, and oftentimes the personal history, that give value, in addition to the value the find has intrinsically.

With patience and attention, with watchfulness and an ever-ready preparedness to take advantage when opportunity offers, the search for the furniture of our forefathers is as easy as it is full of delight and of surprises.

But, first, some misconceptions must be put away.

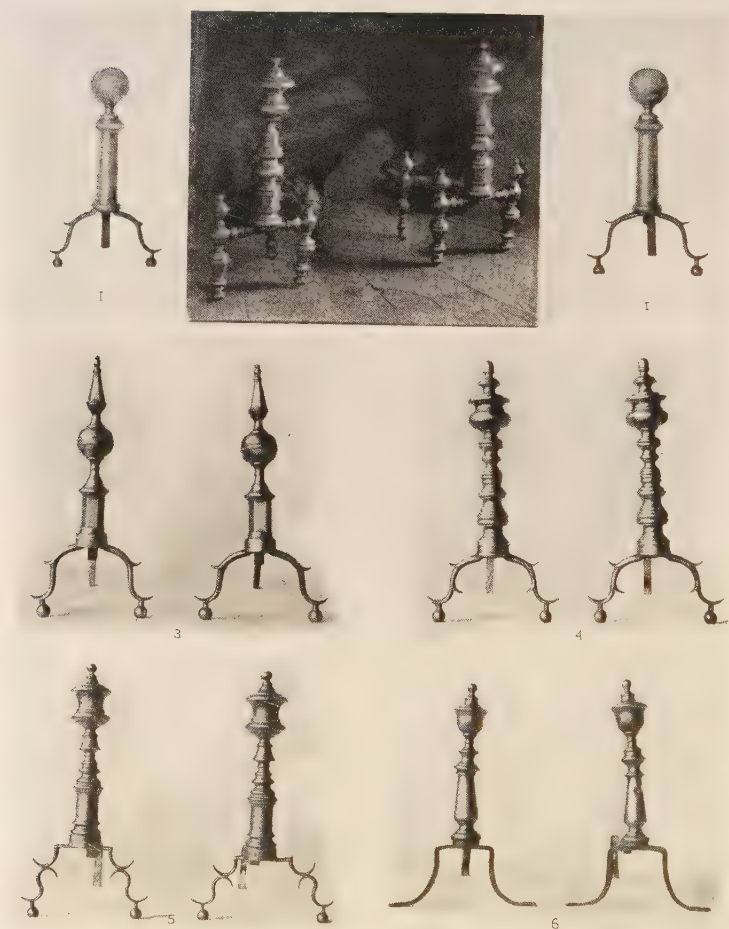
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In America no one, no matter how wealthy, can fill his house with genuine pieces of the seventeenth century, for the museums and a few old families have almost every piece. Few, no matter how wealthy, can fill their houses with pieces of a period anterior to the Revolution. And it is because of these facts, which are well known, that the gathering of furniture of the olden time is looked upon as an insuperable task.

Fortunately, it was not until more than a quarter of a century after the close of the Revolution that the commonizing change in the making of furniture came. The triumph of the styles of Heppelwhite and of Sheraton came late in the eighteenth century. The triumphant beauty of the early Empire came, as the name denotes, early in the nineteenth.

But, in spite of this, the term "Colonial" is attached to all of the furniture of the early times and the early shapes. It has come to be so generally employed, and is a term in itself so suggestive and so sonorous, that it would be invidious indeed to strive to limit its use with chilly literalness.

Nor must all of "Colonial furniture" needs be of mahogany. There is no such narrowing limitation. Mahogany is the most beautiful of all wood for this purpose, yet many of the finest old shapes are of



Brass Andirons

1 Found under a porch in South Carolina. 2 Rights and lefts; made for the inn fireplace in 1825. 3 The oldest pair; full of wasps when found. 4 The acorn-top andirons from Blennerhassett Island. 5 From near the Connecticut line. 6 From an old house in Tallahassee.

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walnut or hickory or cherry or oak or ash. The greater part of the finest old French furniture, too, was not of mahogany.

With the furniture of the past there should go the brass and the iron, the silver and the pewter, of the corresponding time. Certain prints and silver and porcelain from the other side of the Atlantic, if they harmonize in design and period, are acquisitions. In short, in the gathering of "Colonial furniture," of furniture of the past, think of no restriction but that of unbeautiful shape, no limitation but that of unattractiveness. One thing after another should be so chosen as to be a lesson in good taste.

And so, with these preliminary suggestions as to the limitations which broaden the possibilities of the quest, we shall return to the narrative of our own getting, as in no better way can we illustrate the methods and the potentialities.

The love for the antique grows by what it feeds on. Deep within our hearts lay that love, ready for development and growth.

And Fate was very complaisant in those early days of our gathering. It is likely enough that, had there then been numerous disappointments, our ardor would have been chilled. But, as encouragement at the commencement, and marking the ever-

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existent possibility of finding prizes in unexpected places, we secured a distinguished pair of brass andirons at a place where it would have been deemed absolutely impossible to get them.

That impracticable place was Blennerhassett Island! For almost every particle of the furnishings of that stately mansion which made the island famous was lost in the fire and looting which followed the failure of Burr to carve for himself, out of the West, an empire that was to wax strong among the nations of the earth. Now but the barest vestiges of the foundations of the mansion are to be seen. And as for the furniture and the smaller belongings of the scholar and gentleman who cast in his fortune with the would-be Napoleon, the island was long ago swept clear of any trace of them.

And yet, when we went there, we found a treasure out of the past! And it was not something offered, by an island resident, as having belonged to Blennerhassett or as having been used by Burr.

There had been a heavy flood in the Ohio; one of those floods which come every dozen years or so, when the stream swells to mighty volume and overflows vast stretches of land and sweeps away fences and houses and barns.

In walking about the little island, with a man who

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and long lived there and who was well acquainted with the outlines of the great, semi-circular house, with the site of the old-time landing place, with the curious local history, he remarked that Blennerhassett had not chosen most wisely from the standpoint of one who wished to use the island for residence purposes only, because, rich as it is as farm land, and superbly located as it is in the midst of the bending stream, it becomes periodically untenable.

Then, thus reminded, he went on to tell how, driven to the mainland by the last flood, he watched the water's steady rise during the day, and next morning, looking across at his submerged island from his West Virginia refuge, he saw that a dwelling-house had stranded there. In the course of the day he was able, with a companion, to row over to it. No one was within. But the furniture was in place, just as the fleeing family had left it; and the two men put into their boat this pair of acorn-top andirons, which they lifted from the hearth, and a little round-topped hair trunk which was standing in a corner.

Another morning came; but the river had risen afresh in the night, and had picked up the stranded house and carried it away. They opened the trunk, but there was nothing in it to give the slightest hint

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as to where the house had floated from. It might have floated a hundred miles or more. A mystery it had come, and had but touched there for a few hours on its way to the oblivion into which it disappeared.

The man, although impressed by the strangeness of it all, clearly set no particular value on what he had found; his "plunder," as he called it. He showed the andirons, and we admired them.

"Should n't you like to trade those for a hammock?"

It was certainly a curious thing for two travelers to have, and, in truth, it was an odd chance that it happened to be in our possession at the psychic moment. We had left it on the mainland while we rowed over to the island, and it had seen a summer's use.

The unexpectedness of a hammock appealed to him.

"Yes; if I like the looks of it," he said.

He liked it, and the precious andirons became ours.

Now, when one can go to the place where, a century ago, every vestige of movable interest vanished, and find the very floods work in his behalf to carry to his feet a pair of brass andirons, with a strange

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association of romantic Blennerhassett and a haunting history full of possibilities—for the andirons are of a design such as those which came across the mountains in the earliest days of Western settlement, and the house which held them came floating out of vagueness only to vanish into misty vagueness again—anything is possible.

These andirons came shortly after the Shaker chair, and had strong influence in confirming us in the thought of realizing our dream of charming potentialities.

Our Lares and Penates were to be of mahogany and brass!





CHAPTER II

FEELING OUR WAY

VERY early in the quest of the old, one comes to realize that there is often an important difference between finding a prize and securing it. Many of those who possess old furniture have a high and just appreciation of it, and in such cases the right-minded collector does not wish to get it. But there are other owners, who neither prize a thing themselves nor permit it to pass into other hands.

In the garret of one of the oldest houses of the Western Reserve we discovered an old grandfather's clock. It had been made in Connecticut; it had been carried to the shores of Lake Erie in those early days when the wilderness was still unbroken, when the pioneers took with them indispensable furniture, household supplies, clothing, shoes for every mem-

FEELING OUR WAY

ber of the family for years to come and for children still unborn. And here the clock was, after years of usefulness, lying flat on its face on the floor. It had lain there, said the owner, indifferently, for thirty years, waiting to be repaired. He would neither repair it nor set it up, nor would he let any clock-lover obtain it.

And so, although there is somewhat of whimsicality in feeling annoyance because a man does as he pleases with his own, we none the less felt annoyed.

It was not long after this experience that we obtained, from an old house on Long Island, the tall grandfather's clock which we still possess. And our difficulties with it have been full of amusing instruction for us.

The clock is of good shape and design, it is of good height, full seven feet and five inches, and the top is of that charming "broken-arch" or "bonnet-top" design which first made its appearance in the furniture of Queen Anne's time, and was not much used before 1730.

But this clock does not date back so far as that. The dial-plate is of white enamel, and this alone, to begin with, would show that it was not made before the latter part of the Revolution. Before that the dials were of metal; of silver-plate or of brass.

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There are other indications which fix the date at not long after 1790.

There is neither date nor the name of the maker, but it is often surprising, in fixing the age of furniture, how much can be determined from the style and the ornamentation.

The design, on the upper part of the dial-face of this clock, of an eagle, two American flags and two shields, shows that it was not made before the eagle became the national emblem.

And this design is amusingly worthy of examination as an example of bucolic heraldry. The shields are held out on the ends of two sticks, giving the precise effect of spades. The flags are a trifle nondescript in character. The colors of flags and spades are soft red and white and blue, softened still more by age. But the eagle is brown—a golden eagle—and with outstretched wings is perched, not on some classic pedestal, but on the ridge of a barn! The barn is tiny. It is scarcely half the size of the eagle itself. But it is none the less, unmistakably, a plain barn, such as the maker of the design must often have seen large birds perched upon. The entire effect, although it can scarcely be called artistic, is very pleasing, and proves at least an independence of thought on the part of the simple-hearted maker.



Typical Legs and Feet of Important Styles

1 A cabriole or bandy leg, with a web foot; Chippendale period. 2 A cabriole leg, with claw-and-ball foot; Chippendale. 3 The tapering inlaid leg used by Heppelwhite. 4 The slender fluted or reeded leg typical of Sheraton. 5 The winged-claw foot typical of the Empire period. 6 The snake-foot, with its swelling spread at the end; made after 1740

FEELING OUR WAY

The tall cased-in clock stands with a dignity and simplicity of line that are very charming. And it cost but twelve dollars, which is very little for an old, brass-ornamented grandfather's clock.

But it has wooden works! And among the mistakes which collectors just beginning are liable to make, the getting of a clock with wooden works is one.

Not but that wooden works have some degree of special merit. They seem, indeed, to give an air of greater simplicity and age. But, although this effect is right enough as to simplicity, that of age is quite factitious. As a matter of fact, all of the oldest tall clocks have works of brass. The putting in of works of wood came through an enforced simplicity of life resulting from the Revolution. Economy of price was suited to the hard and barren years of the end of the century.

Clocks of this kind are to be prized, as they represent an unquestioned Americanism. Most of them were made in Connecticut, a place noted for the manufacture of other small, round, wooden things besides cog-wheels of clocks, and the one we have was doubtless carried thence across the Sound. But their disadvantage lies in liability to get out of order, and in the difficulty of getting them repaired.

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One is tempted to wish for the reincarnation of that ancient clockmakers' guild, of nearly three hundred years ago, whose members were authorized to seek out and confiscate clocks, as the old charter naïvely had it, "with bad and deceitful works." Ask a modern clockmaker to repair wooden works, and he will shake his head, with a smile. "No one can do that nowadays!"

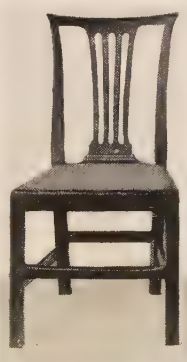
Our tall clock stopped running, after a house moving, and nothing would coax it to go. It was obdurate. No one could be found who could overcome its exasperating inertia.

Once in a while we tried to fix it ourselves, and a kitchen table covered with wooden wheels that looked like pie-crust markers became a familiar sight. We vainly tried to decide upon the part that failed. We vainly made easy the way of the possible transgressor with tallow or the prized panacea of graphite. Vainly we tickled the escapement with quill of oil. Long it stood, silent and lifeless, as if worn out with keeping time. But at length we heard of a queer mechanical genius who lived solitary, on a solitary farm, some miles away.

No sooner heard of than we drove there with pendulum, weights and works. We found him living in the midst of a medley of mechanical contrivances.



- 1
Arm-chair of early and rare design
- 2
Chair with jar-shaped splat and cabriole legs
- 3
Early type, wooden seat
- 4
Back with simple, fine lines
- 5
Jar-shaped splat, with urn; spade feet
- 6
A good, average example of Chippendale



Chippendale Chairs

FEELING OUR WAY

His water was pumped, his cattle were fed, his wagons were hitched, his clothes were hung upon the line, his doors were opened, his shingles were made, his wood was sawed, by one or another of his queer devices. A vastly interesting character, he; and if the getting of wooden works in a clock could but assure the resultant finding of such a human treasure, then the getting of wooden works would be the thing advisable.

To him the fixing of the wooden works was easy. He delighted in doing what no one else could do. And the old clock ticks in our hall, in solemn dignity, as becomes the representative of exigent, inexorable, but gravely decorous Time.

No one can gather a collection without, in the beginning, making mistakes. Now and then, as others do, we picked up the wrong thing, and, finding it out in the course of time, discarded it. It would be difficult to name any line of acquisition in which greater care is requisite. Not only is eternal vigilance the price of having genuine specimens but it must be a vigilance well informed. And even though the pieces in a collection be genuine, there must also be, to enjoy them to the full, some knowledge of styles and names and makes.

There are no names in more common use, in de-

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scribing styles of furniture, than those of Chippendale, Heppelwhite and Sheraton. To these might be added numerous others, the most important being Empire, Adam and Jacobean.

Chippendale was a cabinet-maker of the middle of the eighteenth century. He published a book of designs of furniture, and his name has come to stand for the work of an entire school. There are few articles of furniture on this side of the Atlantic that were made in his own shop, but other workers copied him closely, as he intended them to do. More than four-score cabinet-makers of London are known to have subscribed for his book, and workers in America also eagerly followed his style.

He was a man of forcefulness and originality. He eschewed inlay and veneer and depended for his effects on proportion, strength and craftsmanship. The typical Chippendale chair, in particular, is always recognizable. It has a certain bow-shaped top, and down the middle of the back runs a graceful perforated splat.

There is a wide variety of shape with Chippendale furniture. That he expected. With the design for a certain kind of a chair he would not only give dimensions, and rules for putting together, but he would show differences of possible detail, so that the cabi-



Sheraton Chairs

With typical space above the seat, below splat and cross-bar

A back view, showing structure

Typical rectangular back
Beautiful example. The three
feathers are used because
the Prince of Wales was
Regent when this chair was
made

With graceful, perforated
balusters. Cushion hides
space above seat

With wide space under cross-
bar

FEELING OUR WAY

net-maker using his designs could present them all for the choice of the customer for whom the work was to be done. Different splats were shown, and often a single cut would present one leg straight and one leg cabriole, one-half of a chair with infoliated carving, or shell ornament, or fretwork design, and the other half without; so that one single cut might stand for a dozen different chairs, making thus variety in unity.

To some extent Chippendale adapted from existent shapes. And, oddly enough, not all the shapes known as his are to be found in his published book.

He made no sideboards, as the term is nowadays understood. His sideboards were but side-tables. The sideboard with drawers came in later and may be either Sheraton or Heppelwhite or Empire; although it has come to be common, especially with dealers, to use the term "Chippendale sideboard" on account of the appeal of the name.

After some years of vogue, the Chippendale style was displaced by others, but it has recently come into its own again.

Heppelwhite was a London cabinet-maker who came into prominence about the time of our Revolution. His chairs were less strong than those of Chippendale, because of the construction of the

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backs, which were always of the shape of heart or shield or oval, and most of them delicately beautiful. Fewer of these chairs are in existence, as they did not wear well.

Sheraton, who rose to prominence a few years later in the century than Heppelwhite, never made chairs with backs like those of either of his predecessors. The distinguishing feature with his chairs is that the back, except for the uprights on either side, never comes to the main body of the chair; there is never a splat reaching to the seat; and always there is a connecting piece, or cross-rail, running horizontally from upright to upright, just above the level of the seat. His backs, in general effect, are square or rectangular.

Many of the Chippendale chairs have straight legs and many have cabriole legs. Neither the Sheraton nor the Heppelwhite is ever cabriole.

Sheraton and Heppelwhite, although they differed so radically as to their chair backs, were greatly alike in their methods, in spite of the fact that they rather scorned each other. Their tables, sofas and sideboards are often greatly similar, with an airy lightness of effect, and with straight legs tapering delicately downward. They never used the claw-and-ball, or that kind, known as web-foot,



Heppelwhite Chairs

Shield-shaped back

Arm-chair with upholstered back

Shield-shaped back, no under-bracing

Arm-chair with oval back and garland

Side chair with delicate oval back

A perfect type, with heart-shaped back

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which may be described as a suggested claw. Chippendale used not only the plain foot, usually very solid and substantial, but often the web and the claw-and-ball.

The typical Sheraton leg is round and delicately reeded, or fluted as it is sometimes called; the typical Heppelwhite leg is four-sided and never fluted; and in this lies the most apparent point of differentiation.

Both these men used various fine woods in beautiful inlay-work and delicate marquetry.

The Heppelwhite furniture averages a somewhat higher beauty than the Sheraton, and is particularly noteworthy in chests of drawers and sideboards, with curving fronts, swelling or serpentine, and in perfect little card-tables, delicately inlaid, made to stand, when not in use, half circularly against the wall.

The name of Adam is less known, and this is largely because the Adams (there were two of them) made no furniture themselves, and did little besides making designs for special rooms. They flourished at the close of the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century, and, having closely studied classical and Continental styles, much of their work was distinguished and beautiful.

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Something should be known of the stately seventeenth-century furniture, with its beauty of carving and painting, its cane-work and wainscoting. It is important to remember that in that century there was no mahogany in furniture, as that wood did not come into use until about the year 1700, and not commonly until about 1725. The famous furniture collections show notable seventeenth-century examples; there are some fine ones in Independence Hall, there are some still in possession of private families, and the collector may hope at any time to secure one of the prizes. Furniture of the early half of that century is known as Jacobean.

Empire is a famous classification in old furniture. It denominates the style that arose in France from the revolt that accompanied the revolution against the old order of things in art as in government. It attained its greatest vogue in the period of the First Empire, and was deeply influenced by study of the ancient classic forms, and still more by Napoleon's campaign in Egypt, which had appealed powerfully to the French imagination. Now it was that the winged claw came in; now came the sphinx, the lion and the griffin; now came a revival of the classical acanthus; and now came a wealth of pineapple tops and legs carved in twisted rope. There were splen-



Empire Chairs

Arm-chair with fine
canework

Simple chair, showing char-
acteristic Empire curves

Side view of No. 1, showing
characteristic classic curves
in legs and back

Side chair with a harp back;
the front legs show a curve

Arm-chair; curves of the back
and arms show the period

French chair, showing the
"N" of Napoleon I

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dor and beauty in the Empire style, but soon its very opulence, its very enthusiasm, caused it to degenerate into the monumental, the extravagant and even the grotesque. Its best years in France were from 1803 to 1807—showing the weakness of nomenclature, for Napoleon was not Emperor until after 1803, and the most splendid time of his Empire was after 1807.

The style came to America in the opening of the century, and was adopted and followed with enthusiasm, but at the same time with a saving restraint, although here, too, the style gradually degenerated.

From the first, there was one important difference between the Empire furniture of France and the Empire of America. In France, ormolu was freely used, and over-decoration the sooner resulted. In the United States ormolu was little used. With us the same ornaments were used as by the French, but where the French made them of ormolu the Americans carved them out of the wood. The influence of ormolu, however, is seen in the brass-tipped feet of a considerable number of Empire pieces of American make.

The taste for sideboards with drawers having rapidly extended in the quarter of a century following their introduction, there were many made in Empire

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style, and many are still obtainable. There were, too, some splendid Empire sofas. On this side of the Atlantic it is hard to find good Empire chairs.

These are the principal great styles in regard to which the beginner should, from the first, have a clear idea.

But he must also understand that not only is there wide variety within each style, but that there are many pieces of old furniture which so combine varied styles, or are so different from any precise style, as to make specific classification impossible. Often one can only say, "an old chest of drawers," "a five-slatted chair," "a slant-top secretary," "an eighteenth-century sofa," "a snake-foot tea-table." At least one hundred and forty cabinet-makers are known to have subscribed for the book of designs which, following the example of Chippendale, Sheraton issued, and among these there were many who, instead of copying precisely, made variations to suit their individual fancies.

There are, too, certain names of a different kind of derivation and of narrower application.

Such, for example, is the Pembroke, the name applied to long and narrow tables, square-sided, with ends either square or oval, and with drop-leaves at the sides so long as to reach almost to the floor.

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These came from the name of the eighteenth-century Lady Pembroke who first ordered one made.

The name of Windsor, applied to the style of chair which held wonderful popularity for a century, arose, so says the charming old tale (for every tale is charming that puts royalty in a cottage), from the fact that George the First saw a chair of this design in a humble cottage near Windsor, and was so impressed by it that he had a number made for his own use, thus giving the design an instant popularity.

Never did any chair attain a wider vogue. King George chair though it was, Jefferson sat in one when he wrote the Declaration of Independence, and a greater George than the king of that name had a chair of this pattern in his bedroom at Mount Vernon, and thirty on his piazza!

The terms Dutch, French, Spanish, when used in regard to furniture, are self-explanatory, and to some degree useful in establishing the origin of the forms; but when one finds Spanish chairs commonly made by English workmen, Dutch pieces made in Scotland, French pieces made in Maryland, the practical utility of the terms diminishes. For centuries past, there has been a vast intercourse between various nations and continents, and chairs and ideas have alike been interchanged.

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A century ago the winged claw came from Egypt. Long before that the claw-and-ball came from Holland. But Holland had found it in China!

The claw-and-ball is one of the links uniting us to the haunted and mysterious past of the human race. For the ball, held in the clawed foot, is the egg which is of such supreme importance in the mythology of the world. What came to us from China, by way of Holland, owed its inception to the same deep-based belief that made the egg a part of the monster Serpent Mound of Ohio.

Although the terms French, Dutch, Spanish, Italian will, for the reason pointed out, only serve to embarrass the beginner, he will take a keen delight, later, in widening his horizon by learning considerable in regard to them and in acquiring a knowledge of the great French styles that preceded the Empire: the Louis Quatorze, magnificent and imposing as befitted the reign; Louis Quinze, rich and sumptuous but overdone, fancy run riot in wood; Louis Seize, delicate and charming, seeming to tell of the beauty and sparkle and wit of the *ancien régime*. The term Boulle is applied to work rich in tortoise-shell and inlay, with metal and thin brass, and is the name of the seventeenth-century cabinet-maker who perfected this kind of work.

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And, after all these, the deluge of the machine-made! "What a fall was there, my countrymen!"

The beginner, with a clear outline knowledge of styles and periods, and having familiarized himself with shapes from pictures such as here given, will be prepared to avoid pitfalls such as would entrap the uninformed. And he should, as opportunity offers, study the old collections, such as are displayed at Stenton in Philadelphia, at the Van Cortlandt mansion in New York, at the Essex Institute in Salem, and Girard College, and the fine collection of chairs at the Museum of the Arts of Decoration in Cooper Union, and pieces of a century and more ago that remain in historical buildings such as Independence Hall, Carpenters' Hall, Faneuil Hall, and the City Hall of New York.

And then, prepared for the search of the old and the beautiful, he should set forth with the idea that it is possible to come upon a prize at the most unexpected time or place. Emerson once asked Thoreau where he found so many Indian stones. "Everywhere!" responded Thoreau, stooping as he spoke and picking up a beautiful spear-head. Thus it is with old furniture. The possibilities lie in myriad places. He that seeks is sure to find.

Driving, one day, through a district that was new

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to us, we came to a lonely cross-roads, where stood a deserted house, dilapidated, ancient, shingled to the ground. The yard was overgrown with mighty weeds. But the real collector never ignores a dilapidated and deserted old house.

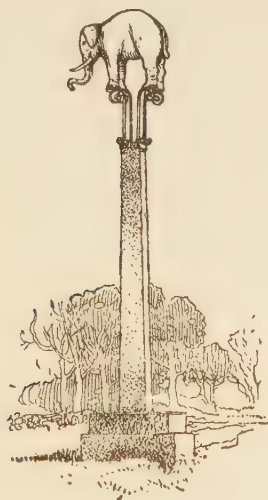
The floors were falling in, the roof was half gone, there was not an article of furniture in the rooms on the ground floor or the second floor, or in that place where furniture is so frequently found, the attic.

But the stars in their courses fight for old furniture. In leaving, a sort of lean-to, off the kitchen, was looked into, and in that lean-to, with the roof partly fallen down over it, was a good-looking, old-fashioned corner-cupboard, which needed only slight repairs to put it into presentable condition. The house was a tenant house and the last tenant had moved away some years before, taking all his belongings with him. "Something there, did you say? It's just a bit he did n't care to carry off, then."

Which illustrates the point, so often tending to the good of the collector, that all the world does not have the same taste as himself. Many are the persons, rich and poor, who care nothing for graceful old furniture and the serene touch of age. It is fortunate that it is so, for if all the world wished for these things there would soon be none left to seek for.

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“Old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine,” were what Hardcastle loved. And many will add to these old furniture. For the old times and the old manners come dreamily back amid the fine old shapes of the past. No old book is so fascinating as when read from the depths of an ancient fireside settle. Nothing tastes so good as when served on old mahogany. And it is charming to see old friends seated in one’s old chairs or circled about a splendid table of the past.





CHAPTER III

THE FINDING OF OLD-TIME HOUSES

HOW pleurably the discovery of the "Old Stone House," as we always called it, comes back to us! We came across it shortly after having realized that we should like to live in an old-time house that would be in harmony with old-time furniture.

The house stood upon a hillside, in the midst of a grove of old apple trees, and was but half an hour by railroad from the Western city which was at that time our home. We were passing, on the highroad; and the captivating site and the prepossessing proportions and an air such as appertains to the charming stone cottages which one sees by the roadside in England or Scotland, irresistibly attracted us. We mounted the stone steps that led up from the road, so that we might see if the unoccupied aspect were but an accidental simulation. The house was as

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empty as it looked, and so, that very afternoon, that very hour, we sought out the owner and learned upon what terms it might be had.

With the coming of the spring we were living there! And in that living we tasted a new savor in life.

An old house is not, indeed, an indispensable adjunct for the lover of the old. Furniture of old design has charm even in a modern house or in a city apartment. But it is a source of additional gratification to house one's ancient things in a building that is also associated with the past.

That little house of stone which was our initial triumph residential, was such an individual house! Old it was, for that part of the country, dating back as it did to the early part of the century just past. What is old or ancient in the Middle West is not so ancient in New York, and what is ancient in New York is not ancient in England, and what is ancient in England would be deemed youthful in Rome.

This house possessed the charm of personal touch and of personal achievement, although not in any sense of distinguished history. It had been built in spite of daunting obstacles, and about the building of it there was a pretty tale of marital devotion.

It was of the sandstone of the neighborhood;

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heavy-eaved it was, and the front windows looked out over a river valley and those at either end into apple trees and up and down a sweeping hill and valley view.

Half a dozen veritable ghost stories, too, had clustered about it. One ghost dug in the cellar for a pot of gold; another dragged a chain across the roof; and there were several more. We heard, one midnight (yes, literally at midnight!), the ghost delving with a mattock in the cellar; we heard the rattled chain; and we understood how it was that a deep-seated dread had gradually grown, and why there were some rooms in the house into which residents of the vicinity would on no account enter.

We had the fascinating experience of laying a few of the ghosts by determining the source of the sounds, and as to one closed room, without door or window, which had been closed in, by the original builder, under the long eaves, as a matter of convenience, and about which a tale of ghostliness had grown, we settled the tradition by opening the room to household use and finding that squirrels had been holding ghost carnival there with nuts.

It is pleasant to look back through the years, at that stone house on the hillside, with the apple trees all about it and the spring of water in the cellar. It



“The single street of the attenuated town.”

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is altered now, in itself and its surroundings, but we speak of it here, as it was the natural outcome of the gathering of old furniture, and points out a kind of possibility open to the collector who has love and faith.

We smile, too, in retrospect, when we remember that we really had quite a reputation, then, as the possessors of Colonial furniture, in spite of what we now know to be the fact, that our pieces were at that time meagre and few.

A spinning-wheel, for example, ought not really to stand for very much, even though charmingly made, and even though accompanied, as ours was, with a greater wheel for the making of yarn, for such pieces, even though of history, are not for use, nowadays, nor are they precisely ornamental, except in some corner of a large house, where they can with propriety and effectiveness be placed. Yet those wheels did much to give us a status; and there were in addition the Blennerhassett andirons, an old chest of drawers, some china and candlesticks, the brass teakettle, and some other articles. Perhaps we had, in some quarters, a rather higher reputation then, as collectors, than we even now deserve; all of which but tends to amuse one as to the opinions of the world.

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We began to realize that we could not remain there forever, that our gathering of furniture must be for some Castle in Spain, still to be acquired; and for a few years there was an interregnum of living in the larger cities of the East. But whether in a house in Philadelphia or an apartment in New York, the search for furniture was never forgotten. On the contrary, we were finding new and wider opportunities and it was a period of interesting acquisition.

The progress of our quest, and the pleasures which such a quest may give, were marked at this time by a dinner which it was now possible to furnish forth in Colonial form.

The soup was served from a huge and aged blue tureen and each of our friends had an old blue bowl. A pewter platter, mighty in diameter, held a turkey which, in accordance with old-time formula, had been fed on beech nuts. A Virginia ham, a veritable Smithfield, boiled in cider and baked with cloves, was also enthroned in blue, and corn-pone and Maryland beaten biscuit added their effect. An ancient tall tankard of pewter held cider, and a pewter mug was at the side of each plate. Each of the enormous dinner plates was old and blue. The salts were three-legged and of the past. The cups were

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of varying degrees of interest. One had belonged to that Major Tallmadge whose prompt action in the André case, in defiance of the hesitating demur of his superior officer, was of such vital importance to the Republic, and it came to us through a lineal descendant. Another, from a friend in Concord, had been part of a set owned by that Major Buttrick at whose command was fired the shot heard round the world. One was from an old family of Tallahassee, one came from England, another from Scotland. Six of the spoons were of the "rat-tail" variety; three, of Austrian make, had been given us by a friend whose family had brought them from that country many years ago, and the other three, a precise match, were found in Venice, a city which was long held by Austria. The tablecloth was of linen spun and woven four generations back, and the liqueur glasses were all old ones, of varying shapes, picked up, each in a different city of the old world, as Tours, Padua, Basle, Milan. The table was an old Sheraton, of mahogany, and the room was lighted with candles; each candlestick having a history or an association with some interesting locality.

At length, while we were still city dwellers, we discovered the house which was to be a further realization of alluring possibilities.

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Toward the close of a day in early spring we entered an old-time town, less than fifty miles from New York City. We were visiting friends, who lived in a house that stood before the Revolution, and after dinner we strolled down the single street of the attenuated town, a street shaded by beautiful trees and with close-by hills looking sleepily down upon it.

And at the end of the village stood an ancient quadrupedal sign, placed high upon its pedestal of granite, in the midst of a tiny triangular green. And facing out toward the ancient sign was a large, square-front, red-brick building, stately but desolate, maple-shaded, and with a monster trumpet vine clinging to its front.

At once it fascinated us. In the middle front, beneath a charming beehive window, was a portico, stone-floored, with four white columns rising to its little roof and with an iron railing bending down at either side of the generous stone steps and terminating at the bottom in clustered bars surmounted by a round brass knob at either side.

Solid shutters shut in the windows; yet not forbiddingly—only with a sort of austere reserve. And we peered into the hall through the narrow windows at either side of the door, and gained an impression of spaciousness and freedom.



“Facing out toward the ancient sign was a large, square-front, red-brick building, stately but desolate. . . . In the middle front, beneath a charming beehive window, was a portico, stone-floored, with four white columns rising to its little roof.”



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The owner crossed the street from his house, seeing that a neighbor with visitors was looking at the once-while inn. "Should you like to look through it?" he said.

"Yes, indeed; we are interested in buildings with old fireplaces."

The owner smiled. "There are sixteen of them, counting fireplaces and Franklins!"

We entered through the heavy-paneled door. We walked through the spacious hall, eleven feet wide and thirty-seven feet long. We looked at the arching in the centre with its supports of fluted pilasters.

It was a case of love at first sight. We opened room after room. We handled brass knobs. We fumbled latches. We counted the fireplaces. We mounted to the outlook, in the centre of the roof, and looked at the hills and the sweeping stretches of woods and pasture-land. We went down into the great cellars, ranging beneath the entire house. We stood behind the bar in the taproom. We peered into the mud-turtle roof of the old brick oven. We peered behind the fireboard of the largest of the fireplaces. And before long we were able to make the building our home.

A staidly restful village, this, out of our American past. It was prosperous and busy, back in stage-coach days, but it has shed the raspy burr of

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business and only the sweet kernel of repose remains. The atmosphere of a serene and mellow past enfolds it, and the old-time inn shares to the full the charm of mellowness and serenity. This building was not constructed until after the Revolution, but Washington himself often rode past where it stands and once he camped on the low-sweeping ridge over which the morning sun looks in at our front windows. The entire vicinity is rich in memories of the brave and stately American officers and of their proud, peruked and periwigged allies of France.

So much for the setting. And, for the house itself, it is associated with many a famous man of the past, with Aaron Burr, and Martin Van Buren, and Horace Greeley, and Washington Irving, and Gouverneur Morris, and many another of national or local fame.

The stately old Georgian house was bare of furniture; but its rooms were of the kind that seem half furnished even when empty, so perfect in proportion they are and of such dignified fineness of line. And in the rehabilitation, one could not but have the pleasurable feeling as of restoring to the building its own, of placing old furniture in rooms that had been made for it.

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With a garden, and flowers, and an orchard of two-score trees, we could feel that we had delightfully gone back to the land as well as gone back into the delicate atmosphere of the past.

Exceptional, all this? No. Others have done similarly. Almost any one can do similarly if he so wishes. And, in regions where there is nothing of old-fashioned architecture, houses may be built like those of the past. A group of lovers of the old in one of the cities of the West recently bought a nearby village, every house in it, and all the land, and then remodeled the houses with great effectiveness after old designs and are allowing no new houses to be built except of the same general style.

But in many a section no altering, no copying is needed. At almost any place within from twenty-five to fifty miles of New York, Boston, Philadelphia or numerous other cities—often at still nearer points—you may be sure of finding an empty old-time house.

If such a house be desired for use in summer only, or if nearness to a city be not essential, the field is vastly wider. In the Berkshires, sought out though they are by thousands as a place of recreation, there are scores of deserted houses open to the storms of winter and the sun of summer. We counted over

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thirty in a single day's drive in the Farmington valley.

But it is the possibility of finding old-time houses within easy reach of great cities that is most unexpected and captivating.

Not that they give every indication of being ready for delightful occupancy. On the contrary, they are apt to give a first impression of being highly undesirable wrecks; as being, for one reason or another, impossible; and they are liable to be weather-beaten and in need of paint and their surroundings to be overgrown with weeds. It is with old houses as it is with old furniture: the eye of faith is necessary.

Why, some time after our happy discovery of it, and before we knew that we should be able to live here ourselves, we told of it to two friends who had confided to us their longing to find some old place in the country not too far away from New York. They came here; they looked the house over; but they had not the eye of faith, and they decided that it would not do. "Why, the walls of the hall are blue and the woodwork is red!" they exclaimed in horror!

The charge was true enough. The evidence of eyesight was incontrovertible. But how long should it have taken them to change the two offending colors?

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Those friends have been here, since—and noted, with a puzzled surprise, that the hall is white and buff, as befits a Colonial hall and as this one was originally.

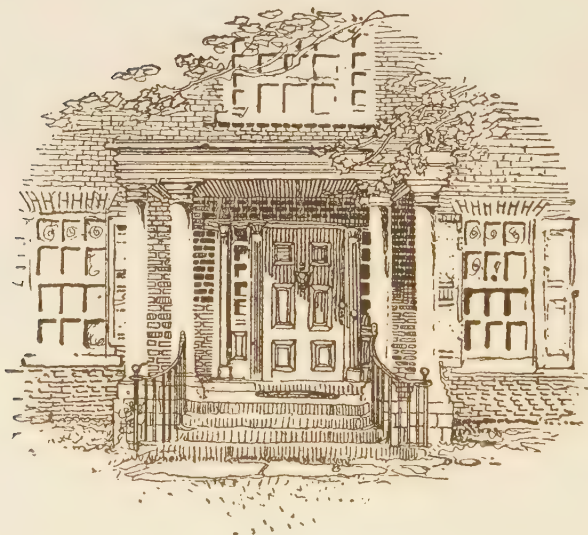
It was with pleasurable zeal that we began to settle ourselves in the once-while inn, with its ancient sign-post, so picturesquely placed, and its monster lilac bushes. And an interesting coincidental touch is that Shakespeare uses the name, saying that “in the suburbs,” at an inn of this very name, “it is best to lodge.”

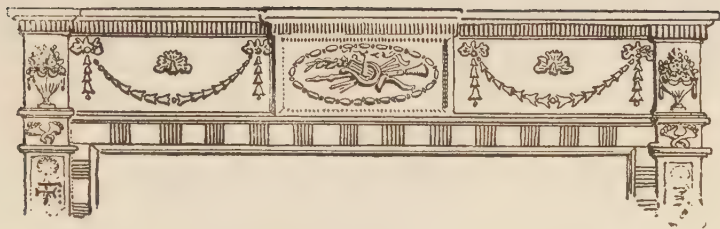
One evening, recently, there was seated with us a fine old lady, whose memory ran far back into the past. She spoke of tales that were told when she was young, and of her own far-away girlhood here; she told of men and women of a time that is past and of how, at balls at this inn, guests came from many miles away to dance till dawn, and of nights upon which, men said, there was high play here and great sums lost or won. And then she told of how, in this very room, she had once sat close to Washington Irving, fine gentleman of the old school that he was, and of how he looked and acted and spoke. “Mr. Irving was not precisely what one would call a handsome man,” said the old lady softly, “but one could not miss seeing that he was a distinguished

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one." And she told with awe, too, of how he briefly referred to his late friend, Sir Walter Scott.

And the old clock ticked in the hall, and the leaping fire glimmered in the score of reflections in the room, and outside, in the darkness, rows of reflections of candles were shining, as if to light all of us back into the glamour and the mystery of the past.





CHAPTER IV

ALTERING THE HOUSE

AND so, with the old white-porticoed maple-shaded house in our possession, it was to be a pleasant task to place properly within it the old furniture that we had, and then to look about for enough more to make the house complete. And the great halls and the lofty rooms, corniced with simple elaborateness, were a charming incentive.

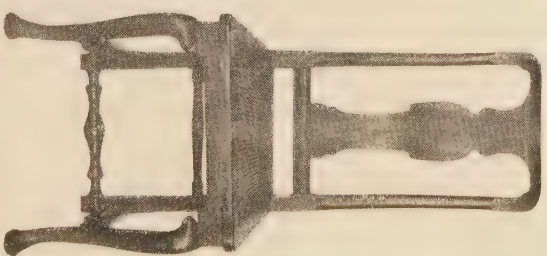
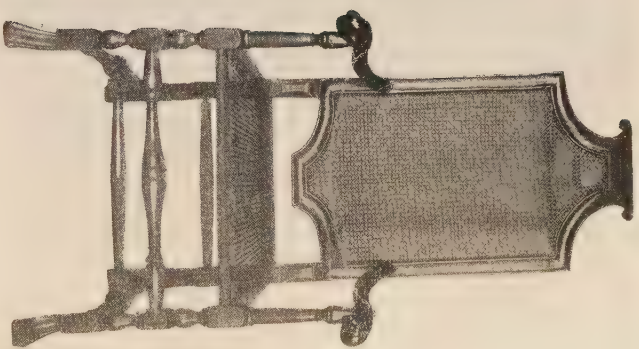
“Old houses mended, cost little less than new before they ’re ended!” cried the cynical Colley Ciber; but assuredly that was very far from being the case in the rehabilitation of the once-while inn. For although the building, naturally enough, had somewhat of a dilapidated appearance when we first saw it, it was firm and strong in essentials. The great, thick walls were good, and the roof was good, and the flooring was good, and the ceilings in every room

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but one were good. With such excellent points in our favor we could afford to smile at Cibber's cynicism; although perhaps a complete restoration, outside and in, including eaves and waxed floors and the addition of porcelain tubs and various convenient sundries not absolutely essential, would make Cibber sager than he seems.

The red and the azure-blue of the halls, from top to bottom of the house, a sort of acreage of space when we came to look at it, was among the things imperatively demanding attention. But a man, working for a couple of days, sandpapered away the offending colors, with only the accompaniment of clouds of dust, and then the white for the woodwork and the soft buff for the walls were quickly put in place; the walls being treated in *tempera*—that is, the color being applied with size instead of oil.

The old kitchen of the inn was a great room, twenty-six feet by sixteen, occupying the ground floor of an extension at the rear, opening from the end of the main hall. At the farther end of this room was a huge brick fireplace, whose structure extended from ceiling to floor, the opening in the brick being of the capacious width of eight feet, a height of six feet, and a depth of three. At the side was the ancient oven, built into the depth of the chimney.



Heavily Underbraced Chairs, known to be late Seventeenth Century

Cane-seat chair, with cane back, and characteristic feet of the period

Dutch-back chair with very early cabriole leg

ALTERING THE HOUSE

There were wooden cupboards along two of the walls, there was a decrepit sink, and the fireplace itself was bricked in at either end, besides holding in its middle an utterly dilapidated range.

But in spite of the discouragements in aspect, the lines were there, and the fireplace was there, and the oak floor was there, and therefore the possibilities were there.

And, first, it was a sin against opportunity to use such a room for a kitchen. Its shape, and the hospitably capacious fireplace, and the pleasant location at the end of the hall, and the pleasing view toward the hills, and the fact that this comfortable room had a lower ceiling than any of the principal rooms of the house, all combined to mark it out as a sitting-room, a working-room.

He who would successfully adopt an old house must approach it with openness of mind and a readiness to metamorphose, and one of our first cares was to make this room what it was so closely fitted for.

Nor was it a difficult task. Like most of the eminently fit things to be done about a house, it was easily done.

The wooden cupboards along the walls, snuffy and of no design, were removed, as was also the sink. A pickaxe cleared away, in an hour, the broken old

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range and the brick at the fireplace ends. The hearth, of brick, was good and sound, and in front of this, before the oak flooring began, was a surface of brick, two feet wide, supported upon an arch in the cellar.

The brick of this two-foot section had woefully sunk, and a workman who was to repair it sent word that he could not come. It was a case of immediate need; and again, like many another case, presented not nearly so formidable a difficulty as it at first sight appeared to do. For, after all, "another man may do what has by man been done!" So, in the evening, with the butcher knife the sunken brick were lifted out, disclosing the bed of sand on which all old hearths are laid. The gutter by the roadside was full of fine sand, and some fifteen bucketfuls raised the bed to its proper level. The bricks were then relaid, and sand and water were used to fill up the crevices as the amateur worker had seen them used in the laying of brick sidewalks when he was a boy; and in less than two hours what had threatened to be a formidable task was entirely completed.

The walls of the old room had had many a coat of whitewash in the years that had gone. Scaly and yellow and blistered they were; but a man with a hoe soon peeled them down to the original surface.

ALTERING THE HOUSE

Friendly discouragers told us that paper could never be made to stick on such a wall ; but there is a way to make it stick. The paperhanger first put on vinegar to kill the action of the lime, then glue ; then, at the end of a day's work in another room, he took what paste he had left and a pound of glue, and brushed over the ceiling and walls with this stickiest of mixtures. Then, indeed, the wallpaper stuck !

Low shelves for books were now placed against the walls, for the greater part of three sides of the room, and then all was ready for the furniture. "There was in the rear of the house," once wrote Hawthorne of another charming old building, "the most delightful little nook that ever afforded snug seclusion." And, somehow, we now had such a nook, except that it was not precisely what one would term little. But it was none the less snug, with its three windows, and the cavernous fireplace in which the flames would leap and roar.

But, having metamorphosed the kitchen into a sitting-room, it was necessary to transform some other room into a kitchen. However, there was a room all ready to our hand—the taproom ! For in an inn that is no longer to be an inn, nothing solags superfluous as the taproom. This one was conveniently

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situated for the new service to which we destined it. It was a matter of putting the wooden bar down in the cellar, of altering bottle cupboards into dish cupboards, of transposing some shelving into a side-table; and the thing was done.

In this room stood one of the ancient Franklins; open-front arrangements of iron with gracefully curving jambs, half stove and half fireplace, of a good deal of dignity in appearance, brass ornamented and with bands of brass; the fire to burn on a flat open hearth, with the use of andirons; and such things were eminently fitting in a house of this sort because of their really having been the inception of the famous Colonial personage whose name still clings to them: the many-sided genius who, not content with fetching fire from the sky, wanted to show people how to use fire in their own houses.

This particular Franklin, however, had to be taken out, as it was not fitted for kitchen use. It was then a simple matter to have the wall bricked up where it had stood. Then a modern cooking range was set up (for the love of the old does not properly or advantageously carry with it a love for the defects of the old); and there was our kitchen, with a door into the broad hall directly across from the dining-room.

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The double parlors of the inn, one of which we made our dining-room, possessed fireplaces which had been bricked up. This bricking up of old fireplaces is often done and looks formidably final, but it was the task of less than half an hour to have the brick torn out and ready for removal. Finely proportioned fireplaces were revealed; but alas! there were none of the treasures which we had fancied might be there. In many an old house there are the fine andirons, or cranes, or perhaps even a fender, of iron or the now precious brass, hidden away and forgotten behind the boards or brick with which the fronts of ancient fireplaces are closed. In this entire inn, however, with its wealth of fireplaces, we found but one pair of andirons thus forgotten—but it was a pleasure to find those!

Putting the rest of the house in a state of preparation for furniture was now, in the main, a matter of no lengthy detail.

A hole in the wall between the once-while kitchen and the dining-room, for convenience in serving, was no longer of use, and it was bricked in and papered. Every Franklin in the house was painted black. Here and there was a stovepipe hole through the ceiling, and every such mar was repaired.

Wallpaper had to be chosen for the various rooms,

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and this was a matter requiring time and care, to secure papers which should accentuate the old-fashioned period, harmonize with furniture and pictures, and be beautiful. In a general way, our choice fell upon greens and yellows, of which, in these days, it is possible to secure specially effective designs.

Some of the doors were without their original brass knobs; and in those cases new knobs were put on—new old knobs, that is, as we possessed a considerable number of old ones, picked up, from time to time, in anticipation of need, at junk shops or village carpenter shops, and even two pair that we found on a street stand in an out-of-the-way corner of Naples. It is well to cultivate the habit of gathering such things—the small change of furniture, so to speak.

The front door was without its original knob, and had an ugly one of white crockery. There was a similar one for the bell wire. Fortunately, in our possession was a pair, found long before in Pennsylvania, of beautiful oval knobs, of brass, attractively grooved in rays, and these were used.

The old knocker had long since disappeared, leaving upon the door only the marring marks of bolt-holes stuffed with putty. By sheer luck an ancient knocker, found in Quebec and long treasured, was

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not only precisely the style of knocker for the door but its bolts so exactly fitted into the ancient holes that it was not necessary to damage the door in the slightest degree in putting it on. A number of old residents have said, "Why, I see you have found the original knocker!"

In addition to the brass knocker and brass knobs thus placed beneath the white portico, there was a brass knob on either side of the steps at the foot of the rail. These last knobs, however, did not appear to be of that metal; for so long a period that village memory ran not to the contrary they had passed as knobs of iron painted green; but a thorough polishing showed the brass.

The banisters needed a few new spindles and the village carpenter, himself an aged relic of the past, was willing to replace them but was fluttered by the very thought. Weeks went by. But when, one day, a spindle to serve as a pattern was pried out of its place and carried to his shop and laid down before him, all was at once simplified. "Why, of course!" And that afternoon he appeared at the inn with the new pieces made carefully out of a mahogany plank, and forthwith proceeded to put them in place.

With the gate beside the house there was more

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difficulty. A stone wall was there, and in the wall a gap with a pair of iron sockets which had once supported the gate, which long before had gone—gone none knew whitherward, perhaps on some old-time night of Hallowe'en.

The old carpenter shook his head. "A long and expensive job! The hinges will have to be made specially to fit these sockets, to begin with!" He shook his head dolefully. "And I have n't any suitable wood, either!" And, after another presentation of the case on our part, "What do you want a gate for, anyway?" he asked whimsically.

But, driving with a friend a few days afterward, a fallen fence and gate were spied. The owner, found, had no use for the gate. It looked as if it would fit the gap in the stone wall. And so we triumphantly carried it home, and it was not only found to be a perfect fit in width, but its hinges were precisely the kind of hinges needed for the sockets and of precisely the needful size. The gate needed to be turned upside down, to match the way of swinging, but that was easily done. The friend assisted, and gleefully helped to saw and nail. In a little while an ordinary picket gate had been transformed into one with diagonal crosspieces, to look the better in a stone wall, and the thing was done.

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After a while it came to us that another problem was to be solved. The inn was a little too large. More than the two lower stories was not needed. But to lessen the roominess it was not necessary to tear anything down. A partition was placed across the hall, at the head of the upper flight of stairs, shutting off the entire third floor completely: a partition simply constructed by setting up packing frames which had been on screen doors shipped from the city. The frames fitted with almost no trouble at all. They were easily covered with a few hangings, giving them an air of completeness. And there was a far greater sense of coziness, and a house easier to keep warm; and at the same time, by a convenient arrangement of doors, we were still able to go into the third floor, through a door into the room at the head of the stairs and from that room into the next, and so around the screen, and thence, if desired, to the outlook. The original builder could not have made it more ready to our hand in this respect.

None of the changes were difficult of achievement, and they were made by simple methods and with no great outlay.

And now, in regard to this inn which was our home and no longer an inn, we thought of those

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words of good omen of old Doctor Johnson: "There is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn."





CHAPTER V

SOME EARLY ACQUISITIONS

THE house altered into readiness, we prepared to furnish it. And it seemed that it would be an excellent thing to have each of the rooms furnished in a different style: one Heppelwhite, one Empire, one Chippendale, one Sheraton, and so on; or at least that the prevailing furniture in each room should be of the same style. But that would be impossible for us to carry out with anything like completeness. It could be done only with free expenditure of money and time unless there should be exceptional opportunities. But it was well to have such a scheme in mind as an ideal, to be adopted as far as possible whenever opportunity could be made.

In any case, no piece of furniture should be se-

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cured not proper in design and age, except in those few cases of indispensable need where a less desirable piece should be used until precisely the right thing could be found; and then we should promptly get rid of the offending substitute.

The floors were to be bare if they could not be correctly covered. Good hand-loom Oriental rugs of satisfactory vegetable dyes fit any date and go with any style of furniture; and this whether the rugs are old or of modern make. But the color scheme must always be kept in mind. Fur rugs and skins go admirably with Colonial furniture. Braided rugs are a charming survival of a past industry, and, especially if they are made with thoughtfulness as to size and color, are very effective in many a place. Rag-carpet rugs are also good, if of a predominant color to go with the color tone of the room. It is not always realized how much, in general effectiveness, depends on the color. For braided rugs, or rag-carpet rugs, there is always some weaver or braider to be found who will be delighted to have intelligent co-operation and who will carefully make just the kind of rug one wishes.

At the sides of the hall, midway in its length, and opposite the side recess in which is the stairway, are four fluted pilasters, from which spring arches, in-



The Hall

SOME EARLY ACQUISITIONS

closing a square with groined and vaulted ceiling. From the centre of this vaulting we hung a chandelier which deserves its name; for it is for candles only, of which it holds the Colonial number of thirteen. It is painted buff, with black trimmings, and has oval reflectors and graceful sconces. It is of iron and tin, and is about three-quarters of a century old.

Just inside the door is a mirror with a mahogany frame, three feet and a half by one and a half, straight-topped, and with slightly projecting cornice. It is of the general type of mirror of from eighty to a hundred and twenty-five years ago, and is itself about a century old.

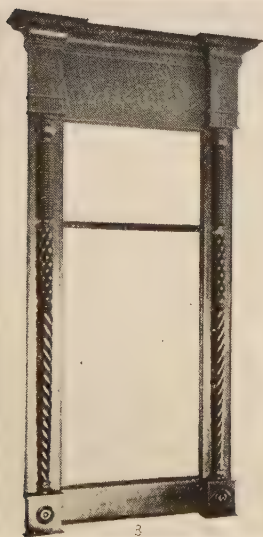
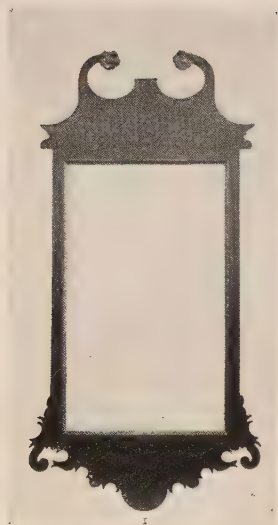
Until the sixteenth century, the woman who would hold up the mirror to Nature had to hold up one of metal, for glass mirrors did not come in until then, and they were introduced by the Venetians. In England glass mirrors were not made until a little more than two hundred years ago—the ever-delightful Pepys tells of a looking-glass sent to the wife of Charles the Second by the Queen of France—but, as glass mirrors were undoubtedly in use in America before the era of English manufacture, they must have been of Continental, and probably Italian, make.

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Our mirror has the effective pineapple ornament, the emblem of hospitality, which makes it the more fitting for a piece of furniture beside the door. Below the pineapple, on either side, is the carved pillar, with twisted-rope design, ending at the bottom in a tassel.

There is a narrow strip of wood across the upper part of the mirror, dividing the inclosed space into two parts. This division was introduced in early days from the impossibility of making single pieces of glass as large as was desired; it was long impossible to make a piece wider or longer than four feet; but even after the art of glass-making was better understood the practice was continued from the belief that the crosspiece was necessary to a proper appearance. It was from this reason that mirrors of the size and period of that in our hall are in two pieces.

The mirror was discovered in a barn, and was entirely without glass. It was thickly marked by flies; thickly, as only a thing can be which has long hung in a screenless, not neat, kitchen of the country. Probably the farm-hands had used it, for many years, as long as a broken piece of glass remained in the corner. Then, when that fragment disappeared, the mirror was thrown into the barn;



Old Mahogany Mirrors

1 Veneer and gilt; and of a shape preceding Empire. 2 Carved mantel-mirror, late eighteenth century. 3 Empire; with twisted rope pilasters ending in rosettes. 4 Empire; with twisted rope, tassel, and pineapple. Bought for thirty-five cents

SOME EARLY ACQUISITIONS

saved from complete destruction by a dim idea of some time repairing it.

It cost us, misused and shattered as it was, precisely thirty-five cents!

Being of beautiful mahogany, although the beauty was hidden by dirt, it was easily cleaned and polished.

And this matter of misuse and discolor points out, what the collector early learns, that neither color nor previous condition of servitude prevents a piece from being desirable.

There is a curious point about this frame, common to numerous other old frames, and typical of the time when artisans had personal pride in each piece of work. The topmost band of the cornice of the frame is not, like all the rest of the frame, of mahogany. It is of rich-looking cherry. And the reason was long ago explained to us by an old cabinet-maker who had learned some of the secrets and ways of the past direct from old-time workers. Mahogany, beautiful as it is, would, in the opinion of some, be too dark for effectiveness at the top of a frame. There, brilliant relief was sought for, to bring out the color and design and lines of all. And in consequence a moulding of cherry was often used as the surmounting piece.

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There being no glass in the mirror, it was necessary to remedy that defect, and two pieces of beveled glass were put in. Nor is this anachronistic, though many claim that beveling has no place in old-fashioned mirrors. It is curious how widespread is that idea. As a matter of fact, beveled glass was long ago made by the Venetians, and Venetian glass-makers were fetched to England, two hundred years ago, to teach this branch of the art, among others, to English workers.

Our mirror has the small rosettes on the upper corners, as was customary; but they are of wood, instead of, as some are, of brass. It does not have the drop-acorn ornaments, as do several old mirrors of the vicinity.

Many mirrors of the period reaching from the late seventeen-eighties to the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century are known as Constitution mirrors, and are surmounted by the eagle, which sprang into popularity on becoming our national bird. Many of these are beautiful specimens and for that reason have been freely reproduced; so freely that the collector must be specially on his guard or else he will acquire a replica instead of an original.

This particular mirror that we are describing has

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the square-lined top, without the eagle. There may have been, originally, in the upper section, some picture instead of glass. Numerous mirrors of that time were made with rudely pictured rural scenes or battle pieces.

Beneath the mirror stands a small, square, Hepelwhite table, with two drawers; a table that looks well in that location, and is also exceedingly useful, for a small brass salver stands on top and the drawers are convenient for gloves and other articles.

The question of pictures came next. They must harmonize with the hall and with the furniture of the olden time, and they must look well.

More pictures were used in the past than is generally supposed. Many an ancient house had tapestry, many a house had pictured wallpaper; but, on the other hand, paintings have been in high repute for centuries, and great numbers were made; the family portrait was an institution; and many prints and engravings and etchings were highly esteemed and commonly owned in the eighteenth century.

Thomas Jefferson had, at Monticello, one hundred and twenty pictures of one kind or another, some of them being copies of the great masters. Washington also possessed a large number of pictures, their total value being inventoried at a little

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over two thousand dollars. Other men of Colonial times had similarly large numbers of pictures, and many are therefore still to be found.

Unless, however, one has sufficient wealth to buy the work of the great painters of the past, he may not care to have only such pictures as ornamented the walls of, say, the eighteenth century. But one may find good etchings, or other pictures, made at the present day, which represent subjects of the past, or he may find pictures whose date is immaterial through being such as are of any time and all time.

For this old hall we were fortunately able to supply a series of prints representing scenes and cities of the Napoleonic wars, these being steel engravings made in the long ago, printed in colors, and acquired by bequest instead of quest, after long possession by older hands.

Then, to complete, there are a few other old-time prints—one of them of particular interest for this building, with its association with Washington Irving, as it is of Aston Hall, the original of the hospitable old English house which Irving describes under the name of Bracebridge.

The Napoleonic series and the others being all of a size, all framed alike in black passe-partout, all



Metal face and phases of the moon



The wooden-works clock

Eighteenth Century "Bonnet-top" Clocks

SOME EARLY ACQUISITIONS

accurately spaced and all put at the same height, serve to accent the general effect of the hall, both as to design and age.

On one side was placed the wooden-works, seven-day, grandfather's clock. There are some old grandfather's clocks that have chimes for the playing of airs, others that mark the tides, the phases of the moon, and not only the hours but the day and the month; so that a simple tall clock, without such things, is not the greatest prize possible. But it being unexceptionable so far as it goes, we deemed it best to secure it when we had the opportunity, for it does not prevent our some day getting a more elaborate one. Meanwhile, the sober ticking, as of a Time that marches instead of flies, is an agreeable sound. To awake in the night and hear it gives an impression as if everything is going on as it ought. And it is pleasant, returning after an absence of a few days and opening the house, to hear it sonorously tick out a welcome.

It is natural to think of the grandfather's clock as being of an older type than the clock which has neither long pendulum nor long case. But that is a mistake. Grandfather's clocks did not come in till some time after this country began to be settled, and before they appeared there were in use here both

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clocks with weights and clocks with spiral springs. The pendulum dates back only some two hundred and fifty years; before that time a balance control was used. And not until after the day of long pendulums did the day of long clock-cases come, and then it came by evolution, because they were needed. At first the long pendulums were used on the old "wag-at-the-walls," as they were termed, and to protect the pendulums, which were frequently stopped or broken, the making of tall cases began. There were few grandfather's clocks before the beginning of the eighteenth century.

With clocks which, like ours, have the weight cords running over narrow-grooved pulleys, there is likely to be difficulty in finding strong enough cord. The chains, used on many clocks, cannot be used on these. After our weights once came down with a great crashing in the middle of the night we set about finding the right cord, and did so, at length, in a fishing-tackle shop where there was line specially made for the holding of tarpon or some other wild creature of the seas.

The cost of the clock, twelve dollars, was very low, even for one so simple as this. For the elaborate ones, it is not to be wondered that high prices are often asked, when we consider some of the prices

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of the past. None were low; and an advertisement in a New York paper of 1816 tells of a tall clock with musical attachments which was to be had for thirteen hundred dollars! And a New York advertisement of some fifteen years earlier arouses wondering interest, for it is of a clock, declared to have been the property of Louis the Sixteenth, which, although it had cost five thousand livres, could be purchased for five hundred dollars! Was it genuine? one wonders. Or had some dealer even then acquired the reprehensible habit of misrepresentation? And what became of it in the century that has since passed?

A few chairs are all that the hall needs; and one of them, simple though it is, is of a great deal of character. It is of ash, without arms, is rush-bottomed, and has four slats across the back. The slats are carefully graduated in width for the sake of effect, the narrowest being at the bottom. The side-posts stand absolutely perpendicular, from top to bottom, with an odd primness of effect, but the four slats are on a light and swaying bend both upward and backward. This chair was made nearly a hundred years ago, in a little Pennsylvania town, and stood for forty years as the entry-chair in the hall of a Pennsylvania lawyer. There are also chairs of this type

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that are made with five slats instead of four, but they are much more rarely found.

A chest stands near one end of the hall, a low chest of black leather studded with brass nails, iron handled and lined with old blue paper. It is a century old, was made at Galashiels in Scotland, and traveled to India and back in the possession of a British officer who served in the old wars there; afterward it came to America.

In the early days, chests were of great importance as part of the furniture of a house, being used for the storage of linen and silver. One may still hope to find a fine chest of oak or dark walnut with somewhat of ornamentation, or even a carved and painted old chest of English make. It would be unlikely, now, to find one of the corniced marquetry chests of the early Dutch, but even that need not be looked upon as altogether impossible.

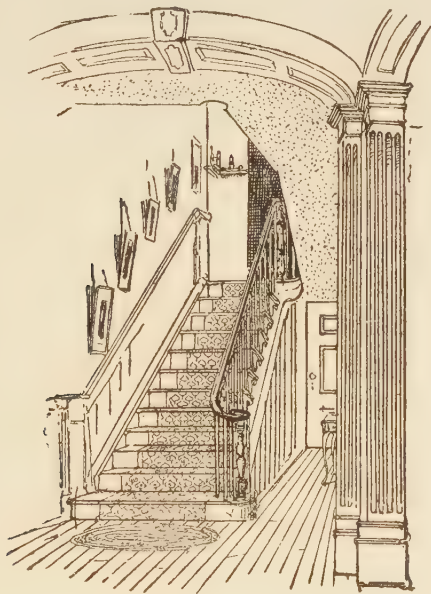
At the farther end of the long hall is the door opening into the room with the big fireplace, and upon this door is placed an ancient iron knocker, acquired through the chance of happening to pass by an old house in the heart of London, literally under the shadow of Westminster, as the old house was being demolished. The demolition had reached the first floor; in half an hour the door would have been

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thrown down; but the offer of a shilling promptly secured the knocker, with bolts and all complete.

It is seldom that one can find an article actually in place, in that sense; but it is always highly satisfactory to find old furniture in use in the house that has long held it; or, what is even better, for the pieces are likely to be better preserved, in the very house where they were long used, but in the garret.

And one of the ways of securing things at the house for which they were originally bought or made is to attend a good country auction.





CHAPTER VI

THE COUNTRY AUCTION

THERE is fascination in the very thought of a country auction. Not, indeed, that there is always something to be picked up, but that there is an ever-present possibility. There is an allurements in the very sight of a country auction bill, whether it be tacked on the oak tree at the watering trough or hung on a string in the village store.

Nor is this merely a modern idea. Those who like to know that in their quest of things of the past they are following in the footsteps of the notable people of a bygone time, will not only remember that auctions have long been held in high esteem (they are as old as the Romans), but that the very Father of His Country went one day to an auction at the breaking up of a neighbor's establishment in the Potomac region, and there purchased furniture to the value, as the queerly precise old record has it,

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of one hundred and sixty-nine pounds, twelve shillings and nine-pence! That Washington, although he bought from a full pocketbook and spent a lavish total, was not able to resist entirely the delight of getting things at as good a bargain as possible, and that he was reluctantly forced upward on different purchases, shilling by shilling and penny by penny, is amusingly apparent. How delightful would be a full and accurate account of his behavior and his bidding at that auction!

Nowadays, in many districts, when an auction impends, handbills are distributed to every little store and post-office within a radius of some ten miles or so, and tacked upon trees at cross-roads. Placed thus in public view, the bills are commented upon by the critical and combined intelligence of the neighborhood.

The important announcements, from the local viewpoint, are of horses and cattle, of farming machinery, of chickens and of hay. Yet almost always, if looked for, may be found the words, tucked away somewhere down toward the bottom, "Household furniture." Sometimes the descriptive "old-fashioned" accompanies the words. Sometimes there is an item of "coverlids and homespun blankets." And "coverlids and homespun" are likely

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to portend ancient chests of drawers and Windsor chairs.

The auction will not be quite so promising as to results if the house is near a summer resort or any of the host of places to which urban dwellers crowd during the distinctly suburban months. And yet this does not make so much difference as it might, for most auctions are held in the spring or fall, before the tide has set from the city or after it has ebbed cityward again.

Most promising, is the little auction where the number of articles is small, where comparatively few people will be attracted, and where, at the end of the little handbills, is modestly printed the announcement that articles sent in by neighbors will be disposed of at the same time.

There is always the likelihood that such an announcement will fetch to the light of an auctioneer's day the single pair of unused andirons from the garret of the aged spinster, the rare candlesticks which some old settler long since discarded and forgot, the four-post bed, the set of drawers, or something else equally interesting, which inquiring search would not have revealed but which the owner is as glad to sell as you are to buy. It is astonishing how many old pieces are put away and forgotten and regarded as of no value; and on the other hand, it is

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astonishing at how much beyond even the city prices some of the country dwellers value their old-time articles. To buy something old at a country auction or a country house, having behind it no dealer's guarantee of quality or condition, having the trouble and expense of getting it home, ought properly to carry with it the benefit of a lower price than for an article repaired and polished, put in perfect condition, and delivered.

On a beautiful October day we set forth to an auction at a house a dozen miles off, situated eight miles from a railroad and far from any town. We carried our luncheon, and oats for the horse, and were equipped for results. We had first interviewed our neighbors, and were told that the auction was held because of the death of an aged woman, long occupant of an ancient house; that her family had lived and died there for a hundred and twenty-five years; that there were only distant kin who felt no personal interest in either the house or the furniture; and that the house was full of old-fashioned things.

And so we went brightly on through the bright October day. The sun was cheerful and warm, and the air was a caress.

We approached the house. It was venerable and wind-beaten and gray, standing high up toward the

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top of a hill, with the old road sweeping by its door. Its ancient shingled sides told of multitude of antique treasures within. Wagons filled with country folk were converging on the spot from all directions. It was assuredly going to be a notable auction!

We reached the place, and the horse was tied to a fence along with a long line of other horses. In the front yard was a lot of kitchen material: wash-tubs, glass fruit jars, ironing boards, clothes-pins, pie-tins, frying pans, and a medley of similar things, little and big. There were men and women poking about. Other men and women, gathered in knots, were enjoying the reunion that comes with every auction—for an auction in the country brings many people together for perhaps the only time in weeks or months.

We were still elated. This exhibit of simple articles on the grass was to make it unnecessary for the auctioneer to lead the throng into the kitchen and cellar on his course through the house.

We went to the door. A grim-visaged woman stood on guard. Glancing beyond her, one could see only a great bareness. "Every thing's out there in the yard!" she snapped.

"But the furniture?"

THE COUNTRY AUCTION

“There ain’t any.”

“But the bill said—”

“It ’s all sold.”

And such was actually the case. Every thing except a few stray worthless pieces had been disposed of at private sale, or had been taken away by the relatives, who, we learned, had swooped down and seized everything worth taking, although they had not even seen the house or their aged relative for many years.

Needless to say, we did not wait for the sale, although the auctioneer was clearing his voice and beginning to gather the people together. They were not all disappointed, of course. There are often extremely desirable bargains to be had in the matter of glass jars and ironing boards and frying pans. And for ourselves—well, it was a beautiful day for a drive, and it is illuminating and mildly chastening to learn that all expectations do not materialize and that every country auction is not a treasure field.

But there was recently a sale which furnished peculiarly good examples of the possibilities that lurk within the country auction, and at the same time showed what wonderful prizes one may at any moment secure. The house whose furniture was sold out was built before the Revolution, and the roll of

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its guests included names famous in our history, such as Alexander Hamilton and General Montgomery and John Jay, and one whose entertainment was matter of condolence as well as respect, General Burgoyne. It was peculiarly a house from which no collector could ever have hoped to secure a single article, any more than from a museum. Yet all the belongings were recently sold at auction!

And chief among the articles of interest, finer even than the set of two hundred pieces of old blue Canton china, was a set of Chippendale chairs, twelve in number.

These twelve chairs, beautifully designed and made, and two of them with arms, were used at the time of General Burgoyne's reception there, an honored prisoner, after his surrender at Saratoga and on his way toward the coast. And there is a curious point about them. Although distinctively Chippendale in design, and in the unmistakable central splat, they show a Dutch influence in that the top line of the back merges into the side lines without a break—giving the effect, that is, as if of a single piece, rounded and bent, instead of one piece at each side and one at the top. Chairs with this peculiarity are usually known as Dutch chairs, but in this case the Chippendale characteristics far outweigh the Dutch



Fire-screen, Mirror, and Chippendale Arm-chairs, sold at a country auction

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and the beauty of design has been but slightly lessened.

There was an auction sale of a different class, not at all a notable one, just a few months ago, only eight miles from our home, at which there were opportunities such as one can ordinarily only dream of.

Unfortunately we did not go, being informed by some who ought to have known better that there was nothing of much interest there. Particulars of the sale came later, from a friend; and here, literally set down, are some of the prices at which sales were actually made, only fifty miles from New York.

A fine and ancient armoire, of dark oak, heavy, dignified, impressive, went for six dollars. Good armchairs, the kind which Sheraton himself called "fancy" chairs, light and delicate, painted, and with touches of gilt, sold for thirty-five cents each. Some mahogany chairs, of late Empire, were bid off at ten cents apiece less. An admirable mahogany chest of drawers, with oval brasses, was knocked down for one dollar! A plain chest of drawers of cherry, with wooden knobs on the drawers, was bid in for twenty-five cents.

Thus it is that the country auction tantalizes with its potentialities.

One day we set off to an old house upon one of the

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oldest roads of the countryside, a thoroughfare familiar to the troops of the Revolution.

But we found it a place where the penalty of too much prosperity had been paid. Generation after generation had thrown away the old and purchased new. There were but few things in the house for which a collector could care, and for those few the prices were run up by the dealers, and then, when they would go no higher, by a man who had come with apparently unlimited money and the intention of procuring a household furnishing of antiques.

But the auction was an amusing one. The auctioneer, genial, loud-voiced, ready-witted, knew almost everyone in a first-name intimacy. As he led the way from room to room, he interspersed the selling with jests and pleasantries. One woman had recently married a second husband, and he was always calling her, with intent to embarrass, by her earlier married name. It so happened that her buyings of the prosaically useful were many, and it gave the auctioneer the frequent opportunity to call out to his clerk to set the sale down to "Mrs. Brown." No matter how often he did this, she was each time genuinely taken off her guard, so deeply had the second marriage impressed her. And so, to his cue of "Mrs. Brown," she invariably gave her agitated con-

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tradiction, "No, no, no! Mrs. Jenkins!" To the intense amusement of the crowd.

In one room was a fine old bellows. A number examined it appreciatively. The man who had come prepared to bid for everything openly admired it. It was of graceful shape, rather large, heavily bossed upon one side and showing a generous wealth of brass nails on its margins, and it possessed an unusually long and heavy and business-like brass nose. Naturally, it showed hard usage, and its leathers showed holes. None the less, it was a distinct potential prize, one of the very few possibilities.

But the auctioneer, when he picked it up, saw only the holes in the leathers; and so, to make a "lot" with it, he held up at the same time a spittoon of mottled brown crockery, past its prime. "How much am I bid for the lot?" he asked.

There was a sudden chill. All at once it seemed that nobody wanted a fine bellows, in spittoon environment. To the admirers of the bellows, including him of the plethoric purse, it seemed that they were asked to bid not on the bellows but upon its obnoxious associate.

"Ten cents!" There was no other bid, and the bellows was ours.

"No; I don't want the other;" and the auctioneer

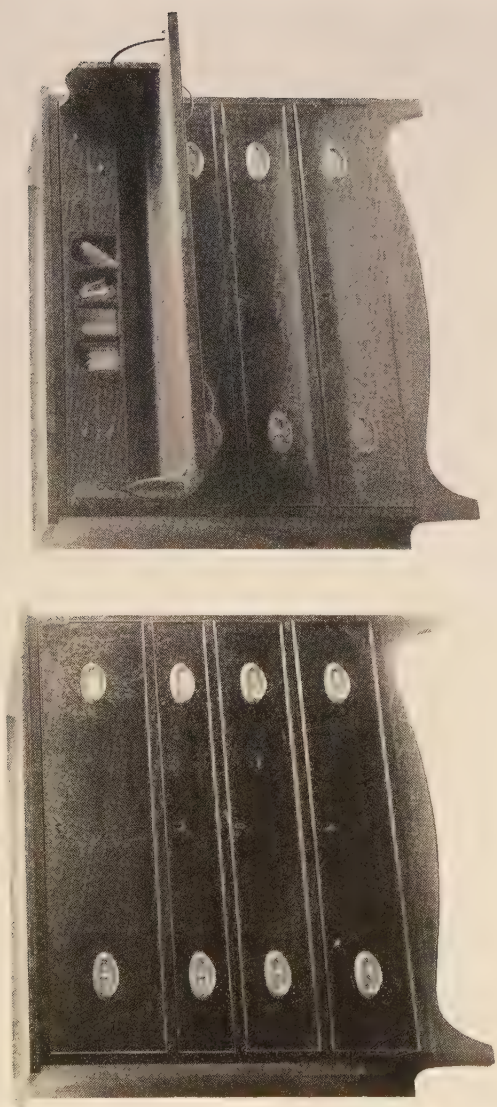
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smiled appreciatively and handed the spittoon, as a gift, to a patriarchal farm-laborer in the front row, who bore it off in toothless glee.

It mattered not, now, that to the very rich had gone the very little of braided rug and acorn mirror and quaint old chair which the sale had afforded. Our bellows for ten cents!—a bellows for which we had been prepared to bid high—had redeemed the day. It mattered not that there were holes in the leathers. By chance, by the fate that watches over true lovers of the old, there was a piece of morocco at home of size sufficient to make new leathers for it, and it took but an hour to do the work.

Considered simply as a money proposition, it would have been more economical to purchase a bellows in the regular way, instead of taking two persons and a horse, and an entire day, for a cross-country drive and an auction sale. But as it is we have a particularly fine bellows, which reminds us of a fine old house of the olden time and of the varied amusing experiences of a pleasant day.

At this same auction we missed an unusual opportunity. A great lot of carpet was put up in one lot: ingrain, of good quality, and not much worn, but of such colors and designs as to displease everybody through their glaring gaudiness. The entire lot was



A Sheraton Desk, closed and open ; bought at a country auction for eight dollars

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knocked down for a trivial sum, we looking on indifferently. And not until afterward did it occur to us that the carpet should have been bought; not to use as a carpet, but to be cut into strips, and made, by the local weaver, into rugs; for it could have been done in such a way as to lose all the gaudiness and make the rugs of softly warm colors and modestly attractive effect.

All good auctions are not in the country. There are some city auction sales which it is a satisfaction, and perhaps a pleasure, to look in upon: auctions at those shops which make a specialty of handling the antique. For at such places there is always the possibility of seeing just the piece you wish, and not a copy but a valuable original. Naturally, in the large cities there are likely to be so many people present as to make low prices unusual for desirable articles. But the prices are often very fair.

There are, too, sales in the city at the breaking up of homes; it may be because a family has died out, it may be from the same reason that caused the Sedley sale at which Becky Sharp was present and where the well-intentioned Dobbin purchased a piano, and where there were also disposed of certain magnificent mahogany tables.

It has come to be rather the custom, however—at

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least in New York—for the sale of the furnishings of an old city home to be held at one of the principal auction-rooms. For the sale of special collections in this manner, catalogues are printed, often illustrated ones, and the articles are on preliminary exhibition for several days.

It is worth remembering that, at the large shops, the end of the day is likely to be the best. The auctioneer is tired, and begins to lessen his attempts to raise prices; and most of the people are restless and beginning, more or less actively, to think of home; many are actually leaving. Drop into the rooms just for those final psychic moments, and you may “learn something to your advantage,” as advertisements have it.

It was at such an hour in the late afternoon that six beautiful old blue dinner-plates were put up—plates worth at least a dollar each, and at ordinary prices two or three dollars. There was no competition, not a single opposing bid following the opening tentative one, and the plates came to us for ten cents apiece; and this in a sale at a fashionable shop where the wealthy congregate. It was at such a time that a dark blue teapot came to us for eighty cents, for which a dealer, who had missed noticing that it was up, at once offered us five dollars.

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It is not always that purchases can be made for a little. The price that lies in antique buys, as Hood would have expressed it, has been the undoing of many a pocketbook. But it is interesting to know that such low prices are possible and that at no time need the buyer of moderate means go to a high extreme.

One of the most charming of the Elia essays expatiates on the pleasure which accompanies the purchase that is a triumph. A purchase is but a purchase when there is a plethoric purse, declares Elia, and he lovingly turns over and over—his immediate text is the gathering of some old china—the thought of the keen pleasure that accompanies the purchase exultant.





CHAPTER VII

ON RAMBLING DRIVING TRIPS

DRIVING into Massachusetts, one day, just over the line from New York State, and descending a long hill into the depths of a narrow valley, we came upon a fine old house, of sun-bleached white, set back from the road among old vines and bushes and with great maples shading the broad and generous doorway. A modest sign, "For Rent," was nailed upon the gatepost. The whole place had an air of repose and the charm of days gone by. Leaving the horse, we went in through the gate. What a paradise for a home! Many miles from a railroad; and what an air the place had! We walked up the path, with the grass hanging over it from the tangled lawn. There was an old portico with seats on either side. There was a knocker on the door. The door was shabby. The sidelights gave a glimpse of the

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hall, with wallpaper in mottled marble blocks. An old clock stood at the bend of the stairs. Two green Windsor chairs were in the hall.

The caretaker, an old farm-hand from a neighboring field, came in at the gate. He gave us the key and sat down on the doorstep to wait and smoke.

We went through the house. There were old settles by the kitchen hearth. There were two four-poster beds. There were old splint-bottom chairs. There were candlesticks of pewter and brass, and iron fire-dogs.

The whole house had a scattering of furniture, but was far from completely furnished. Yet there was enough for the suggestion of a fascinating home.

We were completely carried away with our find of this old house, apparently forsaken by its owners and awaiting a new home-maker. We went back to the door. The old man rose up and after a moment of hesitation grinned. Just why he should grin was not apparent, but that it was from a sense of some subtle joke which he was enjoying was quite clear.

“What place is this?”

“The old W—— place.”

“How long since it has been occupied?”

“Nine years. And last spring, Mr. G——, the present owner, fixed it up.”

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"Is any of the furniture to be sold, or is the house to be rented furnished?"

But the man was a Yankee. "Do you want to rent or do you want to buy?" he asked.

We were not Yankees, but he was answered with another question: "What is the rent?"

"Six—hundred—dollars—for—the—season!" he lined out slowly, as if he were relishingly rolling the money under his tongue.

We were surprised, and said so, for we knew something of rents in neighborhoods far from a railway.

"Yes. Six—hundred—dollars! That 's what he 's looking to get. You 're only nine miles from Lenox over that mountain, though it 's thirteen by road."

He looked at us. "Do you want to rent it?"

"No." We smiled. We knew that there was to be some explanation.

"Well, I'm to give anybody that looks at it one of these."

With that he shoved out, with a motion like that of breaking coal with a poker, a card; and the card was that of a well-known dealer in antiques on Fourth Avenue.

It was all plain. It did not need the garrulous

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explanation of how the dealer had leased the old house, bought what old things he could in the vicinity, and sent out others from his New York shop.

The old caretaker walked down to the hitching-post with us. "You 're the fourth ones to look at it. Lenox don't seem to come over very fast. I helped put up those beds and balance that clock on that turning step of the stairs. It would n't hold the fourth corner of the clock, so I put a stick under it. Yes, the W——s are all dead. The house has been for rent for seventy-two dollars a year for year after year, and now this New Yorker has it and puts in these old traps. Don't you want to buy any of them? The other folks took off chairs and candlesticks. The price is pasted on 'em. Ninety dollars for that clock. It 's pine and won't go. Fifteen dollars apiece for those old green chairs; the price is on 'em under the seat. A hundred dollars for the dining-table. No? You are the beatenest folks! You don't seem to care for these things. You came over the wrong mountain. The folks from over Lenox mountain just paid what the label said and went off tickled to death."

There was certainly nothing the matter with the old farmhouse—except the rent; nothing the matter with the articles the dealer had put in—except that

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he was asking more than New York prices on account of their present environment. It was certainly an amusing and unexpected way to sell antiques and enhance the rentable value of a house. It could not be called a trap, for the articles of furniture were all genuine.

Driving trips need not always be distant from one's home. At times the most surprising discoveries may be made but a short distance from where one lives.

We were out, one day, driving about the country, and came to a road so steep that the buggy seemed in imminent danger of sliding down over the back of the horse. The happy nomenclature of the neighborhood, so it appeared, had given to this road the cognomen of the "Teakettle Spout," on such an abrupt and dipping line was it constructed.

At the foot of the descent a little stream forced its way with clamorous perseverance over the rocks with which the bed was filled. And on the farther side, on a sort of shelf of land a little above the brook, stood an ancient gabled cottage with dentilled portico.

A widow lived there, with her son and an ancient servant—a servant such as these modern days can never develop! Old, old she was—one could al-



Brown and gold, called "Fancy"
by Sheraton

Arm-chair to match

Painted and gilt chair of 1820

A pre-Revolutionary chair, showing
Dutch influence

Charming old chairs of simple design, none of which is of mahogany

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most think her older than the house—and with such an ancient unstayed gown, and with a perfect gem of a mulberry-colored melon bonnet of cotton print, shaped like a scoop, quilted with cottony puffs and lined ridges, and encompassing a gentle, faithful face. Sukey; that was her fitting name. And in that lonely house, in that steep valley, with such a servant, it seemed certain that there must be treasure.

Falling into a talk of old times and old things, we were shown up the steep stairs into the attic. Well, there was not so very much, after all; but there were cupboards and chests, and a litter of jugs and baskets, badly broken and in sad repair.

And there, against the farther wall, was an ancient four-poster, piled high with blue feather-ticks. It was a slender Heppelwhite frame, without elaborate ornamentation, but well and capably built. Ornamentation, indeed, is more apt to be lacking on old four-posters than on any other class of furniture. The drapery, the curtains, were more depended upon for fine looks than was the framework. Even George Washington, when at home, slept in a bed of comparatively plain frame. The poet's ideal of the builders who, in the elder days of art, wrought each minute and unseen part with greatest care, does not

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hold as to bedmaking in the eighteenth century ; nor, in fact, does it hold to any appreciable extent in the art work of centuries ago, human nature being always pretty much the same and there never having been very much of strong determination to beautify what was to be hidden.

With no difficulty, the four-poster was obtained, and it was arranged that the son was to drive it within a few days to our home.

And so, one morning, there was the sound of a wagon stopping at our door, and looking out, we saw the son of the widow. But where was the four-poster ! It was not visible, and so the presumption was that the young man had come to say that, after all, they did not wish to dispose of it.

But the bed was there ! At the house we had told the widow that we did not care for the four pieces, full of rope-holes through which, in old-time days, the rope was crossed and crisscrossed to make a strong foundation for the bedding and to hold the bedstead together. For although they appeared to be clean enough, it seemed obviously better not to use them. Without these rope-holed pieces the bedstead, when taken down, was but a bundle of sticks—the four posts and the slender bars of the canopy, and the graceful head-board.

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The problem presented by a bed that was now without ends and sides was overcome by the use of an iron bedstead strictly hygienic and up-to-date—old enough in association, too, if one must insist, for of Og, King of Bashan, we read that “his bedstead was a bedstead of iron.” It exactly fitted the space between the upright posts. To the corners of this iron bedstead the posts were fastened. A valance was made to cover the iron frame. All that showed, therefore, was just what ought to show: the canopy and the posts and the head-board.

The posts show not only above the valance, but clear to the floor, outside of it; for we remembered the admirable suggestion of Chippendale that it is a grievous fault to hide the legs of a bed, because there is then the appearance of posts supported upon cloth.

In meeting strangers, on one's random rambles in the country, offense is often needlessly given, and an opportunity lost, by the blunt inquiry as to whether things are for sale. Most people rightly resent this. They dislike having a stranger come to their door and, pointing to this or that article, ask, “How much?” Even though they may really wish to sell they resent the implication that they have the appearance of being so poor as to desire to dispose of anything, or the alternative implication that they

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do not themselves have sufficient taste to care for what others deem beautiful.

But the danger of giving offense, of hurting the feelings of the sensitive, of making one's self disagreeable, and of thereby losing the chance of an acquisition, is entirely avoided by an inquiry as to whether the owner of the thing you want knows of any one in the neighborhood who possesses similar articles and would be willing to sell. It is really astonishing what a difference the use of this formula makes. Many a person who would coldly draw away from a direct question is quite ready to sell when he thinks your inquiry is directed toward his neighbor!

Few things are more exasperating for the collector wandering away from the beaten track, driving off into one country district or another, than to come upon fine old articles ruined deliberately; not worn out, but so smashed or altered as to be useless. The memory of a splendid grandfather's clock lying in hopeless fragments upon a woodpile, comes strongly; so does the memory of two sofas—one, so ingeniously mangled, Procrustes-like, to fit into a recess too small for it, that it was irreparable, and the other, a fine Empire, with its back sawed off to make it into a nondescript bench with ends; the

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sawed-off pieces having then been burned up, making restoration impossible.

On the other hand, eyes are often gladdened, as one drives along some out-of-the-way road, by the sight of charming Windsors upon a porch, or quaint old settles, or even, what we once saw on the verandah of a delightful little low-browed house, a black banister-back chair made nearly two hundred years ago. There is keen pleasure in seeing these, without the disturbing desire to possess them.

Driving one day through one of the oldest neighborhoods of the Western Reserve, we stopped at a venerable house, white and narrow eaved. And in the garret was a curious sight. There were lines on lines of ancient coats and gowns, the old clothes of the family's ancestors, preserved partly, no doubt, from a feeling of pride, partly, no doubt, from some vaguely transmitted instinct of thrift. There the old clothes hung, ghostly, limp, strange, swaying slightly as the door opened upon them, as if startled out of mysterious reveries.

In the same garret stood, primly, some enormous old-fashioned bandboxes, covered with gay-flowered paper. And there, too, we came across a silver toddy ladle, with long and flexible handle of whalebone; and in the bottom of the bowl of the ladle was

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welded a shilling of George the Third; as, within three such ladles which we once saw in a house near Oxford, were welded silver coins of the time of Anne.

After learning not to be too quick to consider a piece of furniture older than it is, it is important not to go to the other extreme of being too quick to consider it new. At any time, and especially upon driving rambles into comparatively unfrequented regions, the very old may be happened upon.

Stopping, not far from one of the battlefields of the South, at a great old house from whose size and appearance we should have expected much, but where we knew it was unlikely that the exigencies of war had left a single thing of the past, we found bareness and comfortlessness, but hospitality. We found a genial man, the sole occupant, who, it being a cold day and the fire being unresponsive, poured oil upon the troubled flame directly from a large can, with the nonchalant remark: "It 's all right; it 's Georgia State test!" And in this house, in spite of its bareness, we found an enormous armoire, huge in size, with ball feet; it was at least a century and a half old, and stood against the bare wall, defiant, lonely, striking, though not really beautiful.

The unexpected may at any time be met with.



“The sight of chairs upon a porch.” Banister-back and Windsors

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At a house, almost a cabin, near a village which gave its name to one of the great battles, we found the owner and occupant to be the descendant of one of the old families, ruined by the Civil War and its havoc. His father had lived in a great house which had been destroyed; but servants had saved, and he now proudly took out and displayed, old commissions and letters and seals of Colonial and Revolutionary days, and, at the last, the uniform of a colonel in the Mexican War, with sword and soft red sash.

It was in a bleak and scantily-settled hill country, some fifty miles from the town, Gallipolis, where unhappy exiles from France, refugees from the French Revolution, vainly tried to hew homes out of the Ohio wilderness, that we came upon a sunny farmhouse, a veritable bit out of New England, the home of one of the early settlers, where, in a cupboard off the dining-room, there were forty pieces of lavender "sprigged" china, the cups and sugar-bowl and plates being of octagonal form; and in this house there were old prints, framed in narrow black as they would be framed to-day, of battles and heroes of the War of 1812.

And in Kentucky, driving along the fine limestone pikes near the Ohio, where, in a dry season, the white

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dust rises in clouds and settles like snow upon the shrubs and grass, where there are mighty oaks and lines of silver poplars, where houses, old and new, look out toward the magnificent river and where the friendly people cordially give a welcome, there are numerous things of value.

One is first attracted by the tall ten-rail fences which give such an impression of the jumping powers of Kentucky colts, but one is more attracted by the recurrent old-time houses of squared timbers and by the things of the olden time still to be found. In some of the better houses there are fine treasures, but even in many a simpler house there are articles of what may be termed the splint-bottom school of antiques; iron fire-dogs, simple chairs, old waffle-irons, long-handled, not for the purpose of supping with a certain distinguished one of evil reputation but for holding the irons over the blazing coals in deep fireplaces.

If one only realizes it, it is sometimes as easy to go from one place to another, within reasonable limits, on a vacation outing, as to remain fixed at one point. It was on a brief summer driving trip that we went through the French Creek region of the northwestern part of Pennsylvania; that region in which Washington first won reputation, early in the 1750's, as

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envoy from the Governor of Virginia to the commandant of a French fort but a few miles from Lake Erie.

We stayed over night at a somewhat old-fashioned hotel in a little town; and the room in which Lafayette had slept, on the occasion of his triumphal progress through the United States when an old man, was shown us, and the ball-room where he had danced. It was doubtless a mistake of the stonemason that made the date upon the building, cut in the stone upon the front, a year later than that of Lafayette's visit!

However, the house had a good deal of dignity of its own; and it also had a really good specimen of Empire sideboard, very large, with pillars and claw feet, that stood out of sight in a passageway between dining-room and kitchen.

The proprietor was pleased that it was looked upon as of any interest. Frankly, he did not greatly value it. "I am using it, you see," he said; "but if you care to have a carpenter build a set of shelves, with doors, in there for me, to put my dishes in, you may take the sideboard away."

Well, there were reasons why it was inconvenient to remain there and superintend the necessary work; and generous though the hotelkeeper's offer was, its

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acceptance would have made the obtaining of the sideboard an expensive matter, after all—as all who have had doors and shelving built to order will understand—but the incident shows anew how on every hand lie possibilities.

But one does not always meet with moderate estimates of value, even in little-visited neighborhoods.

“Be you looking for blue plates?” was the inquiry once addressed to us by a woman in the front door of an isolated house. She had a few rather good ones; plates worth fifty cents apiece in the shops, in current money with the merchant. But she had been influenced, isolated though she was, by the unwise talk of some one who, not from love of the old or from consideration for the owner, but from uninformed enthusiasm, had set prices out of all reason upon her pieces.

“Be you looking for blue plates?” We looked at them; but found that the owner firmly, almost aggressively, was holding them at five dollars a plate.

And we once came across a farmhouse where a woman, after showing a fairly good pattern of old-fashioned coverlet, remarked that if any one should ever want to buy it she would “let it go” for fifty dollars. It was we, not she, who let it go.

No matter how far one may travel in excursions

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into the country, it is difficult to find a district where the professional dealer has not been. The trail of the dealer is over almost all. He finds his profit in the lonely farmhouse. Nowhere else can he obtain the real things so cheaply. And even if dishonest in the matter of being willing to sell imitations, he none the less finds his profit here, for he can pick up fine old pieces for far less than he could have them manufactured.

Yet the dealer, with all his persistent cleverness and his experience, misses many a treasure. He is often unable to impress the people that they should sell to him. Family pride is apt to assert itself, even though there may be no real desire to retain the desired piece. To sell to a lover of the old, to one who really admires the things for their own sake, has in it no sting. But to sell for mere money, and very little at that, is another matter.

But, on the other hand, there are many folk who have no dislike of selling to dealers; who, indeed, are more ready to sell more cheaply to them; for, so it appears, the dealer must be at the expense of handling and repairing before he can sell again! A sort of topsyturvydom of logic, but none the less frequently met with.

These itinerant dealers, who do so much to make

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hard the way of the amateur collector by seizing upon things before his appearance, are of two kinds: the junk dealers, who frankly buy as scrap and who are fatal to many a candlestick and many a pair of andirons, and the furniture men who buy as furniture, and who are fatal, from the collector's viewpoint, to many a rare old specimen.

Sometimes a quite obvious opportunity to acquire a good bit remains curiously open, in spite of the indefatigable collectors and dealers.

In an empty, deserted, ruined house, and put away behind a door, in a cellar, and forgotten, we once came upon a pair of good iron hand-wrought andirons. There was some reason why, that day, it was not convenient to carry the big pieces of iron with us, and so we drove regretfully on without them.

But, a year later, we were driving once more down the charming road, a river on one side and a rocky hill on the other, and once more we came to the old, deserted house, which was just a little more ruinous, just a little more falling to pieces, than it had been when we first discovered it.

Naturally, the thought of the andirons once more came. And so, into the empty house (the door had long since disappeared), across the quavering floor,

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down the trembling stair—and there, tucked away, just as they had been found and left twelve months before, were the andirons!

The owner, in a house not far away, was found, and gladly took a silver quarter in exchange for the rusty fire-dogs whose existence had been so completely forgotten.

Always one is upon the verge of the unanticipated, the unlooked-for; except, indeed, that the unexpected happens so often to the enthusiast as thereby to lose much of its unexpectedness.

We were driving along a road of alluring beauty, between Tyringham and Great Barrington, amid the tender glory of the sweeping hills, and we stopped at an empty cottage whose door stood invitingly open. This cottage had been examined but a short time before, so we learned, by former President Cleveland, with the view of possibly making it the summer home for himself and his family, so commanding was its location on the hillside with a superb view stretching away for miles.

Meadow grass swept up to the very door, and right at the entrance was a flowing spring. Some of the rooms were unplastered, some had stone fireplaces, and all were empty of furniture.

From the side door the path led between lilac

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bushes and tansy to a little barn and a littler tool-shed. The barn, like the house, was entirely empty, and so was the shed.

Against the wall of the shed was a cupboard made for holding glue and nails and workshop odds and ends.

The cupboard was bare—but its door instantly attracted attention. It was a complete mirror frame!—with sides and top and bottom complete, and even the wooden stripping of the back.





CHAPTER VIII

THE FIELD IN NEW YORK AND VICINITY

NEW YORK, the exponent of the present, the representative of the modern, the strenuous city of the twentieth century, in which no crime is so serious as being of the past, would scarcely be looked upon as a place for the collector of the antique. Yet in New York City there is much that is old, and in its near vicinity there is even more. There are, too, in New York, as residents or transients, more people seeking for the old than seek for it in any other of our cities, and therefore the demand is met with a supply, even if the supply is far from being in every case all that it might be.

So eager is the desire to tear down old-time buildings, that it is difficult to imagine things of the past in the spick-span structures that have arisen in their place; and it was a keen pleasure to find unexpect-

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tedly in one of the newest of apartment houses, a really astonishing collection, brought to New York by the descendants of an old family coming here from the South, and consisting of portraits, old letters from presidents and generals, jewels of the wife of an officer of Washington, old mahogany, even a painting by that remarkable artist, of almost a century ago, Chester Harding, who, from being a painter of houses became a maker of portraits and in the very beginning of his career went to Paris—but it was Paris in Kentucky!—for his artistic experience, and then painted the great folk of the earth.

There is a splendid collection of antique furniture in the Van Cortlandt mansion house, in charge of one of the patriotic societies; and it points the possibilities of what may be in this great city, that the finest sofa there was donated by a sergeant of the New York police force.

One comes to know of many a beautiful piece in private ownership and to divine that there must be in all a vast number; and, wherever things are, the collector who has faith and experience knows that possibilities of securing them must from time to time arise.

Of course, there are great shops where antiques, or alleged antiques, are sold, but, for our-

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selves, we came to prefer the pleasure of dropping in upon a curious old Austrian, who keeps a little shop in rather a shabby part of the city. A man of curious personal history he; twenty-one years he served in the Austrian army, and fourteen of those years was stationed as a soldier in Venice. He and his four brothers were in the crushing defeat of Solferino; and, of the five, only he escaped with life.

His shop, as one would expect, is like a shop in a quiet street of a foreign town. He always has about the same row of dusty pewter mugs and jugs, the same stand of arms, the same group of fire-irons and brasses and samovars, the same dusty old bronze lamps and hot-water dishes; but somewhere in that shop is always a bit of treasure. Perhaps it is a helmet coal-scuttle, perhaps a silver candlestick, perhaps a pewter tankard, a brass fender, a tall clock, a Sheffield tray, an old mirror frame.

His is not the smart shop of big prices. His is that happy find—a “shabby shop”!

His prices have gone up somewhat with the passing of the years. He will tell you that things are harder to get than they used to be before the growth of interest in antiques, and that now “when I go to an auction on Long Island I can hardly get through the crowd of carriages at the door.” Naturally

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enough, the helmet coal-scuttle, in brass, for two dollars, is now but a memory of six years ago; now, at eight dollars each, they stay with him but a day. But there are other things on which prices have not proportionately changed.

To the favored few he gives the key to his cabinet of small and precious things; gives it and turns away to leave one in peace to look over the seals and miniatures and ivory-bound prayer-books and tortoiseshell snuff-boxes of generations ago. It is a fetching process, this exploration; it seldom fails of the resultant "How much?"—and then there will be two or three things set together and the old Austrian will teeter up and down on his toes and say, "So much for the lot!"

A type, this, of an interesting class of dealer that is supposed never to have existed in this country or else to have passed away; and yet he and such as he, although in limited number, may be unearthed.

In the neighborhood of New York there are many small towns where treasures of old furniture can still be found. What used to be the most promising of these towns is on Long Island, within pleasant trolleying distance of the city, and a shop there should be described, on account of its being typical of a class.



Tea and Antiques



“That happy find—a ‘shabby-shop’ !”

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An old man, himself a lover of the antique, bought and stored a prodigious number of old tables and chairs, bureaus and desks, andirons and fenders and candlesticks. His was distinctly one of the "shabby shops," to use again a term beloved of the collector. No cabinet-maker's strategy improved his pieces, no smell of linseed oil or shellac marked efforts to brighten their dinginess. There were the dust and the smell and the breakages that go with so many of the things of long ago.

The owner of this great collection spent his time in looking for more. Although his stock filled an old-fashioned country store, and three barns and an attic, there was not room for all his acquisitions, and we have seen a bandy-legged claw-and-ball table beside the hencoop, exposed to the weather, and several old sofas, of no mean design, with only tarpaulin to cover their gray hairs.

With what eagerness, on our first visit, we mounted the store porch and approached the door. It was locked. We shook it and peered in. Against the window frame hung several brown silver salvers. They were dull and unpolished, but fine. Old candlesticks, broken blue teapots, and the odds and ends of years of gathering filled the rest of the window. After peering for many minutes a man showed him-

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self, who, spearing us with his single eye, suspiciously demanded to know if we wanted anything in particular.

What we wanted was to see the dealer, of whom we had heard, and then under his guidance to see his stock. So the first inquiry was for the dealer.

"He 's over in Connecticut, to a sale."

We naturally wanted to see the stock anyhow, having trolleyed out there for no other purpose. But the one-eyed seemed to resent any idea of looking at the stock and was even disinclined to accept a hint as to opening the door. No museum attendant, after the closing hour, could have been more disobliging than was this supposed-to-be clerk in the middle of the afternoon.

"Well, have you any open-work brass fenders?"

He grudgingly opened the door. We entered. But there was barely room to move. Back to back there were chests of drawers and shabby high-boys, there were sofas rampant, there were beds with testers and beds with low posts jostling one another, and there were chaotic masses of work-tables, candle-stands and mirror frames. On the walls, upon pegs, hung innumerable chairs. In the corners were piles of things randomly heaped, good, bad and indifferent merged indistinguishably.

Our eyes grew accustomed to the dim light that fil-

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tered in through dirty windows, and, although the one-eyed could not at once discover where any brass fenders were lost, we saw an inlaid dressing glass which greatly pleased us. But the man took a queerer turn and said that he did n't know what to charge, and, anyway, Mr. H— didn't care particularly about selling that.

So it was with many another thing; and the random prices he now and then consented to give seemed to have little connection with the value of the articles, and we left him to lock up and returned to the city.

On the occasion of another trip, a year later, we found the old man who was the collector of this great mass of treasure. And we discovered his secret. He really did not want to sell! He wanted to gather in. A Sheraton sofa was picked out—but he did not want it to leave his sight. He evaded putting a price on it. He showed a poor and featureless one and offered that instead. He had little to say and little to sell. He was a veritable miser of old furniture!

He died, not long after this, and his heirs showed clearly that they were not of his way of thinking. For all the shabby old treasures were sent to Fifth Avenue, and during six days' rapid selling, following wide advertising, they were auctioned to make a New

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York holiday. They were sold in their shabby, un-repaired condition, so that the buyers could see precisely what they were getting, but there was the proviso that every article should be put in perfect condition, and be properly polished, before delivery.

This occurred but recently, and is another example of twentieth-century opportunities.

In contrast to that man of Long Island is one whose place is near the Kill van Kull. This man's establishment has a widespread area of back rooms behind the store front, but the stock is so variable that there may not be a single piece worth buying or there may be a dozen choice bits.

We have never seen the owner at his shop. He spends his time in trips that take him not only to near-by points but even as far as Pennsylvania and Massachusetts.

His wife meets customers; and though she does not seem to know a Chippendale from a Jacobean by name, she knows them in value, and her "Them 's seven dollars," or "Them 's one dollar" covers the ground.

When, perhaps in Westchester or in some New Jersey village, this man finds a Heppelwhite side-board or a slant-top secretary, he sends word to a few of his customers—clients is perhaps a good word—

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and they are in his shop when the crated piece appears. He takes it as a compliment to his shrewdness when his shop is empty of all but the trash that seems bound to accumulate about every antique dealer, no matter what his knowledge.

We came to know the dealer personally in a curious way. One morning, some men were heard, within the portico of our home, apparently fumbling at the knocker on the front door. Then came a voice: "I 'll give you three dollars for one like that." It was clearly a case of one man offering another a price for a knocker like our treasure from Quebec, with the added implication, in the absence of knowledge of identity and purpose, that a price was put upon that particular knocker!

Now, that was not a thing to be taken lightly; and so there was the prompt overhauling of two forms disappearing down the village street.

Then, for the first time, was met the owner of the Kill van Kull shop! With a local guide he was covering the neighborhood, seeking what old pieces of furniture he could, financially speaking, devour, and in all honesty of purpose he had been explaining to his guide that knockers such as ours are always desirable.

He came back to the old brick building and, enter-

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ing, his eyes at once glanced upon a treasure which erstwhile had stood in his own rambling establishment. He recognized it at once, for thus it is with the enthusiastic vendor of treasures. Then he looked at our other things, and, moved thereto by fellow feeling (for this class of dealer is always a lover of furniture at heart, and not a salesman), he launched into curious details of what his trips had taught him, especially in regard to our particular countryside; telling of here a cupboard, there a chest of drawers, there an old clock, which he had been on the trail of and in hopes of getting but which we might secure even if he did not. His familiarity with roads and houses was astonishing. He had unearthed curious secrets of garret and cellar, and frankly talked of them. And from him we learned to realize more fully, not only what treasures the perseverance and ingratiating ways of such men secure, but also that there are country dwellers who, ready enough to sell to the amateur, will not sell to the professional dealer.

By way of contrast there has sprung up in the immediate vicinity of New York, within driving or easy automobiling distance of the city, a new type of shop, fascinating in appearance, where the wares are spread through sundry rooms, with an air of furnish-

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ing rather than of display, and where, in the midst of a glow of polished mahogany and Sheffield plate, luncheon and tea are served, so that while you eat you are tempted. The opportunity for talk while tea is sipped leads to many a purchase, large and small, and a most delightful sort of shopkeeping is thus carried on. As to reliability and genuineness, it is merely as it is everywhere else—that is, the judgment of the buyer himself must always in the last resort be relied upon to pick the true from the false, if any should be false.

On the Jersey side of the Hudson, less than twenty miles from New York City, we called on an aged couple on the day of the fiftieth anniversary of their wedding. And their house is one of the many reminders that much of the antique is still to be found.

But, alas! their sitting room that day displayed an incongruous sight. For in a semi-circle were ten armchairs of painfully modern construction, sent in as anniversary gifts by relatives, and these chairs had displaced the charming old furniture that the couple loved. But elsewhere in the house there were still the treasured old articles.

After a while, we strolled out into the garden, and we all sat down beside an overgrown mass of fragrant box under the shadow of an ancient well-

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sweep, where moss pinks were growing in fragrant beds. And the dear old lady gave us strawberries and cream in delightful old saucers of lustre-ware, and the pitcher and bowl were of lustre-ware as well. Somehow, it was all like a leaf out of the past; the fine old faces, in an environment still older.

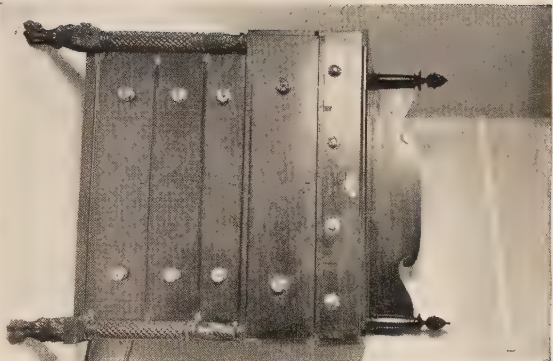
It is one thing to state, in broad generalization, that within the immediate vicinity of New York there are countless articles of old furniture; it is another to tell definitely what some particular locality can show, so that the collector may be stimulated to new efforts and a deeper enthusiasm.

And so, selecting one single village, we took its furniture census.

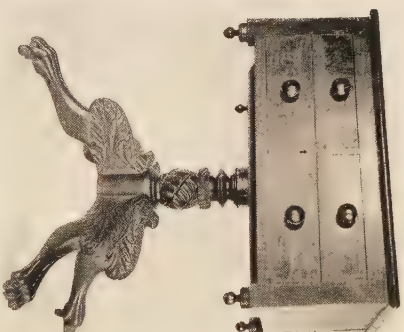
The village is less than two hours by rail from New York, it is a village of ancestry, of the leaven of the Colonies and the Revolution. It is, too, a village in whose vicinity, upon little lanes and cross-roads, still dwell colored folk, lineal descendants of those slaves of New York who were not freed until three-quarters of a century ago.

The village has more old furniture than some; it has less than others; it may therefore well stand as an example of what still exists in some of the towns not far from the metropolis.

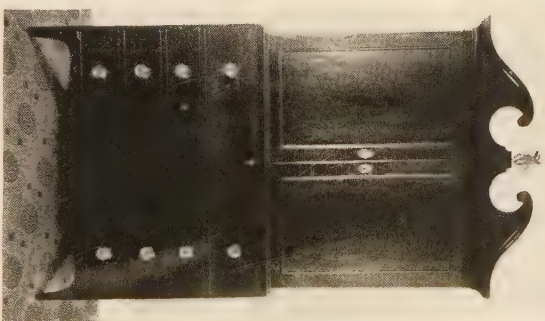
For sale? Most fortunately, no! For if the old-



Fine Empire chest of drawers, with original
rosette brasses



Elaborately carved Empire work-table



Linen closet of the end of the eighteenth
century, with broken arch and
brass eagle

In the Village of the Furniture Census

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time treasures were all upon the market the field would all too soon be exhausted. And yet, by chance or mischance, almost anything is apt some time to be obtainable. The piece which cannot, to-day, be purchased at any price, may be for sale to-morrow. And when such things are for sale, it would please those who have long treasured them to know that they are to pass into the hands of such as shall long treasure them in turn.

Here, literally enumerated, naught to exaggerate nor ought to set down excessively, is what is in that town.

Beginning on the outskirts of the village, there is a rambling old house, connected with the literary history of a bygone generation, and in this house there are silver candlesticks and two silver candelabra, a Chippendale chair, a set of fine old Canton china, and two good corner-cupboards built into a wainscoted wall.

Next comes a still more ancient house: a picturesquely low-eaved cottage, sheltered under the shoulder of a hill; and here are an Empire sofa, an old settee, rush-seated and slender-spoked, blue coverlets, and, chief pride of the cottage, a fine armchair that was made more than a century and a half ago.

Another house; and here are a grandfather's clock,

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old silver, Windsor chairs, and a Heppelwhite sideboard sadly broken but with all the fragments carefully kept with intent to repair.

Continuing, we reach a house whose stately charm, antedating the Revolution, lies in gambrel roof, and small-paned windows, and felicitous chimneys, and white paint, and perfect proportion of parts, and magnificent encompassing trees. And it holds wealth of the old-fashioned, to match such an exterior—chests of drawers, innumerable tables, a tall clock, a wardrobe with bonnet-top, a cabinet, a sideboard and many chairs. On the door is an old brass knocker.

The setting down of these literal facts must seem like a fairy tale to those who believe that almost all old-fashioned furniture has been seized upon.

In another house there is a really splendid chest of drawers, there are old brass fenders, blue and white coverlets, blue Spode, a particularly beautiful pair of brass tongs, a grandfather's clock, a brass knocker, an old tip-table; and, until recently, there lay, forgotten and neglected, in the wagon-shed, a fine old sofa, which needed but renovation to make it an ornament to any house.

Chippendale chairs, Windsor chairs, an Empire sideboard with pillars and claws, a mirror—such is the treasure of another house; and, continuing the

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furniture census, we next note a little old dwelling, inhabited by an aged widow, where there are a full tea-set of beautiful Lowestoft, a pair of andirons, and a tall clock.

Across the street from this house is one in which are an old Dutch wardrobe, paneled, of oak, a four-post bed, a rare mantel clock in brass and mahogany, a lustre pitcher, a chest of drawers, a bookcase with paneled glass, and a brass knocker.

A little down the street, and there stands a house wherein is a fine old set of drawers. Until a few years ago the house was furnished from top to bottom with things ancient, most of which were widely scattered at an auction following the owner's death.

Another house, and we find an old mirror; in another, a Sheraton desk; another, cranes and pothooks.

Then a house where, until recently, there were a number of splint-bottom and Windsor chairs, which some one from New York, finding that the owner would sell, purchased for twenty-five cents apiece.

Another house shows a brass door-knocker; another has a candlestand and a fine desk. And then comes one, lived in by a venerable man, whose taste, running to the modern, has filled his old white house with furniture of the latest design, while his attic is crowded with old-fashioned pieces which he will not even think of parting with and which he rarely per-

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mits any one to see, he being over ninety and not much liking to be disturbed. A brass knocker on the side door, the fifth thus far in this little village, is the only sign, below the garret, that the building holds anything of old-time note.

Another house, and there is a rare set of three dining-tables, rope-legged, and of mahogany; there is a brass fender; there is an old-fashioned dressing-glass and table; there are old blue dishes; there is an old traveling-case, of mahogany and brass, with its bottles and drinking-glasses.

Another house has an old and desirable sideboard, which a dealer's recent offer of fifty dollars did not tempt the owner to part with, and a brass knocker. In another there is a mirror of mahogany, with ormolu mounting. Another has a Sheraton table, a bandy-legged table, a knocker, and chairs and candlesticks. In the next a banjo clock had just been sold. In another are a Chippendale chair, a mirror with acorn drops, old-time silhouettes, a mahogany dining-table, and tea-tables of ancient make.

Almost through the little village now, we come to a house in which are an unusually beautiful chest of drawers of Empire design, a Lowestoft cream-jug, rush-bottomed chairs of very graceful pattern, and very fine andirons.

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On the farther edge of the village is a house in which are two sideboards, one Sheraton and one Empire, an Empire cheval glass, a diamond-paned secretary, andirons, tip-tables, two chests of drawers, and eight old decanters of cut glass!

Near by is a house with a brass knocker, and a French bed that has roll ends. Then a house in which is a great four-post Empire bed, a set of Sheffield-plate silver in fascinating shapes, and an Empire clock.

And in the immediate vicinity of the village there is a house in which are a beautiful specimen of five-slat chair, a Continental mirror, old andirons and candlesticks; and another house wherein are an Empire table, with pillars elaborately ornamented, a swell-front cabinet, and a tea-table.

Confident though we were, from past experiences, that we should find many a specimen of the old, the total of the enumeration amazed us. It is putting it moderately to say that in that one little village there is enough to stock a museum. And there is many another village with treasure equal or superior.

It is not only the big but the little, not only the piece of fine furniture but the piece of what may be called kitchen furniture, which one may unexpectedly find.

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On a Westchester road, at a long distance from any other house, we once came across one of those pathetic marks of where a habitation had been—a line of stone foundation and a few scattered bricks. Fire had utterly destroyed the house; no attempt had been made to rebuild; the ruins had been overhauled with care, and then vines had grown clusteringly over the burnt stone and brick.

There, unearthed by some chance, by the sliding of some pile of ashes, lay a huge iron gipsy kettle with three legs. Picturesque in shape it was and of unusual size. There was nobody of whom to buy it, it was as deserted and lost as if it were in mid-ocean, and so it went along with us. It was red with rust, but a coat of dead black transformed it into a most satisfactory wood-box, to stand beside one of our fireplaces in which the andirons are of iron—the wood-box in the adjoining room, where the fireplace fittings are of brass, being a large brass kettle, even larger than the iron one just described, which a farmer's wife gladly disposed of to us in exchange for a preserving kettle of modern make purchased for her at the village store; for there are many who are quite ready to give the ancient in exchange for the new.

In one particular, the vicinity of New York, es-

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pecially here and there on Long Island, and a little in the Hudson River region and in near-by parts of Westchester County, is different from the rest of the United States in that it shows more of the Dutch influence. And this means not only Dutch ideas and peculiarities, as, the Dutch paneled armoires and heavy cupboards, and the blue tiles, with Scripture subjects, around fireplaces, and similar things to go with the old Dutch "stoops," but the influence of the Orient; for the Dutch, great traders that they were, brought home with them from the East, along with the spices and silks for which they more specifically sailed, specimens of ebony furniture, of teakwood, of sandalwood, of wicker, and the grotesque designs of the Chinese.

The quest of old-time furniture leads one into many a strange and interesting place. But never was there a more picturesque experience encountered by furniture-lovers than befell us in the hilly region north of New York City.

At the foot of a long, steep road, a road at whose summit had taken place one of the noted tragedies of the Revolution, stood an old broad-fronted house. It was on the verge of becoming decrepit. One end had noticeably sagged, and there was a tottering noddingness about the entire structure. On the door

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was a fine old brass eagle knocker, and, wishing to make some inquiry about the roads, it was gently touched—gently, because of the peacefulness of the ancient house and of the environing hills, glorified by a sun-bright haze.

And as the knock at the door of an ancient castle might be expected to draw forth an armored custodian, so this knock summoned a fitting warder.

An old, old man, stepping out of the dim past into that old doorway, appeared there. He was straight and slender and tall. His hair was iron-gray and his black tie was worn like an old-time stock. His tail-coat hung in full folds about his shrunken form. A distinguished-looking man he was, and he gave the wished-for information in a soft and gentle voice, and with the manner of old-fashioned courtesy.

Asked if his house were a house of history: "Not exactly," he replied; "and yet, many a man of history, many an officer, has eaten and slept here. This was an inn long before the Revolution and during that war, and this road was one of the principal highways between New York and Connecticut. But won't you come in, both of you?" his glance taking in the waiting figure in the carriage.

We entered the hall: a hall of considerable dignity. An old-fashioned lantern hung from the cen-

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tre, and a stairway swept upward with low and easy steps. Political woodcuts of the past were lined along the side of the hall, and an ancient clock ticked steadily as it had ticked there for decades.

In every room was some treasure. But, best of all, in a broad, low room directly off the hall, there was a carved mantel of wood and there was a rarely beautiful Heppelwhite chair with characteristic shield-back of fine mahogany. This chair, not strong structurally, was very heavy when lifted, showing the density of West Indian mahogany. There was a Sheraton side-table with wings and reeded legs; in a cupboard in the chimney-corner there were bits of china which he lovingly took up and told about; and there was a Chippendale table, than which we have never seen one more beautiful, with cabriole legs, and claw-and-ball feet, and elaborate workmanship in every detail; the edges were carved and the sides were carved and the bends of the cabriole legs were carved.

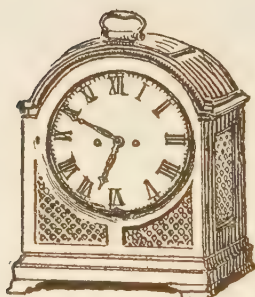
He fondled the old things caressingly, and spoke gently of the past. "I am ninety-three years old," he said quietly.

In a corner beyond the marvelous table stood an old octagonal mahogany music-stand, and on the table lay a flute. We knew at once that it could be

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only his. And could any musical instrument be more fitting!

His eyes lingered lovingly upon it. At a hint that it would be a pleasure to hear him, he took it up. Then his blue eyes grew brighter, his face lighted up anew, and he played old tunes, ballads of the long ago, with a soft shrilling of the notes, almost as if a ghost were playing in a dream.





CHAPTER IX

THE FIELD IN PHILADELPHIA AND VICINITY

FOR the lover of the old, the sign of ancient furniture always possesses a potential attraction, whether it be represented by the "Antichita" of a back street in Perugia, the "Anciens Meubles" of Tours, or the "Antiques" of Fourth Avenue or Pine Street.

On our own side of the water, antiques—of all things—are apt to run in fashions, although fashion is supposed to have nothing to do except with the things of to-day.

In the fashionable shops, fashion rules in the setting forth of the old! At one time no prominent establishment will dare be without its pair of stone lions; at another time, the old stone cistern-top of Italy, with grooves worn by the ropes of centuries, will be everywhere in view. One suspects that the ropes are sometimes of the twentieth century, but

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none the less, if there is a place to put it, one cannot be in the fashion without the stone well-curb! At another time, no sign of stone is to be seen, except on inquiry, and articles of wood arbitrarily rule. And, according to fashion, the ruling wooden furniture may be Dutch or French or our own Colonial.

But the real collector cares nothing for the passing fashion, and is therefore likely to be best pleased with the out-of-the-way shops where fashions are unknown. In Philadelphia, as in other large cities, these are tucked away in odd corners.

Not that the large shops are to be arbitrarily avoided. One may find there precisely the genuine bit he has been searching for. And in Philadelphia, on an average, prices are likely to range lower than in New York.

Philadelphia and its vicinity offer a fruitful field. A loan exhibition given in the Germantown quarter of the city, only a few years ago—it was in 1902—gave some indication of the prodigious number of old pieces still preserved. After all, it need not be wondered at. For in that section there is an imposing array of Colonial homes, and the entire city is a city of ancestry. Not only, therefore, did all the exhibits have a local habitation, but many were connected with historical names. There was profusion

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of old silver and pewter, of brass and china; there was profusion of swell-front chests, of pieces of inlay and marquetry, of pieces of oak and walnut and cherry and mahogany. Naturally, too, there were fine specimens of the Windsor chair, Philadelphia being the city in which that style of chair was first made in this country, not long after King George the First established its vogue in England.

One knows that the field must be broad in which there are such gleanings, and so the quest of old-time furniture thereabouts has the constant fascination of probable success.

When the breaking up of some old family, or the death of its last representative, brings about the dispersion of old furniture, and the goods are to be sold, it is not customary, as it is in New York, to hold the sale at a shop, but in the old house itself.

One such sale, and it was typical, was held not long ago in a house in the central part of what is known as Old Philadelphia, near Rittenhouse Square. An aged spinster, last of her line, had died, and strangers went tramping through the house that had sheltered her forefathers and then herself.

Even here, with the passing of the years, the modern had crept in, but there was still much of the old, particularly in the sitting room, which, in accordance

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with ancient Philadelphia custom, was situated on the second floor of the extension, above the dining-room:—this situation of the sitting room of the old families giving that darkened effect to the houses, after nightfall, that so puzzles visitors from other cities.

There were book-cases, and tables, and chairs; there was a rare dressing-glass, in old lacquer; there was a fire-screen, a tiny square of mahogany, which pushed up and down, adjustably, upon a slender spindle; and there was some of the rare Belleek ware, made in Ireland half a century ago; a tea service, cups and saucers and teapot and bowl, all of the distinguished Belleek shape, low, squat, and broad:—a kind of ware whose manufacture has been revived in Ireland, of late years, and is coming again upon the market.

In the numberless little trips which may be made in the vicinity of Philadelphia the impression of the existence of a great quantity of old-time material, in private houses and in shops, is confirmed.

At a town upon the Delaware, less than an hour by rail from the city, we found a curious little wistful-faced, droop-shouldered man; silent, rather; almost shy, indeed. His shop seemed to have but little in it. A few candlesticks, a piece or two of ma-

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hogany, some china which, if one were disposed to be captious, might scoffingly be set down as modern reproduction.

At first the man was torpidly indifferent; but we knew of him by reputation and therefore knew that there was more to him and to his ancient furnishings than appeared upon the surface. But nothing had given a hint of what was really to come.

Slowly he thawed; slowly he perceived that he was talking to some one who appreciated and cared; and he led the way into a long and narrow room behind his little shop. It was full of treasures; and then he led the way upstairs, through his living rooms, and into apartments filled to overflowing with ancient things, where old cupboards and secretary drawers hid quantities of glass and genuine deep blue china.

Then down the street we went with him, and through a passageway, into a cold and drafty barn crowded full with antiquities.

In one of the dark corners stood, side by side, a high-boy and a chest-on-chest, names often used interchangeably, although, properly speaking, a chest-on-chest comes practically to the ground, whereas a high-boy leaves sufficient space for cabriole legs.

This high-boy was one with its top constructed for

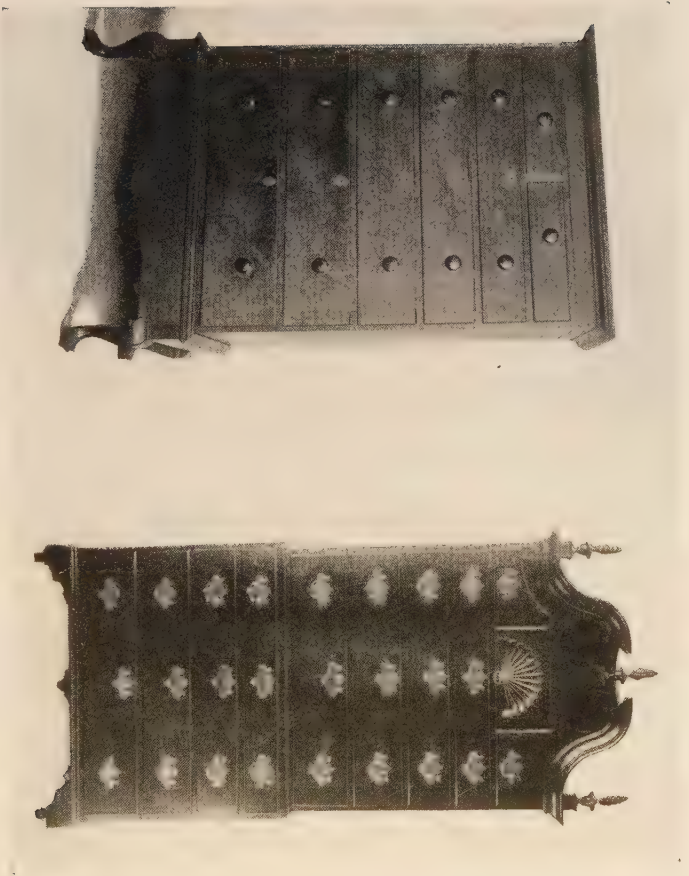
THE QUEST OF THE COLONIAL

the display of china, and in appearance it was not much later than the date at which high-boys first appeared; that is, about the beginning of the eighteenth century. The chest-on-chest was of a later date; naturally enough, as, although there were a few in use by 1750, they did not become at all common before the time of the Revolution.

Then there was an odd interlude. There was still more to show, he said, but he had promised to act as pall-bearer at a funeral and he hoped that we would excuse him for a while. He assumed black hat, black coat, and air of decent mournfulness, and we watched him go away. With an open trust much at variance with his initial and almost churlish torpidity, he offered to leave us in charge of one of his places, to look about, while he was away! But we did not wish to remain as guardians in his absence, and therefore interested ourselves in the task, that at first seemed hopeless, of finding an attractive luncheon: and found, after a while, a wonderful darky, in an unpromising looking place, who gave us delectable deviled crabs and other fruit of the sea.

Then back from the funeral came the dealer; but not until he was out of his black clothes and their concomitant mournfulness was he himself again.

This time he led us to a boathouse, with a shaky



Pennsylvania High-boy and Chest-on-chest

PHILADELPHIA AND VICINITY

floor, where through great ragged holes we could see the Delaware coursing beneath. Here were gathered many additional pieces of the old and valuable. Once, in New York, we came upon a corner-cupboard holding up a roof which had settled down upon it; once in New Jersey, we looked at a chest of drawers, with a serpentine front, which stood in a corner where the floor was dangerously sinking; and here, on the Delaware, were pieces of furniture which threatened to fall into the river if we should step across the shaky floor to reach them.

There were chairs needing faith as well as works to restore them, there were candlestands which, reversing nature's law, could maintain a balance only when standing on their heads. Everything was as he had obtained it; nothing had been repaired, nothing restored. But in spite of a glad willingness to show his wares to those who would appreciate, it was clear enough that his personal desire, apart from needful considerations of prosaic dollars, was to hoard and not to sell.

In truth, this man and his establishment were curiously, in character, like the old collector and his rambling warerooms on Long Island; and since doctors are a class by themselves, and lawyers and business men and mechanics, why should there not

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be distinctive traits about a class who handle and sell the old for the love of it!

If one is to consider all of Pennsylvania as being in the vicinity of Philadelphia, it opens a wide field. The line of southern counties is rich in articles of the early time, and one may go as far as Westmoreland County and the Ligonier valley, where the stone houses, stone chimneyed, give a not misleading promise of early treasures, or even so far as that region of homely and delightful romance, Mrs. Deland's "Old Chester." One may explore the south and west of Pennsylvania with deep pleasure in the exploration and with satisfaction in results; but it is not positively needful that one should go so far; there is much to be had within easy distance of Philadelphia.

We wandered at random, one autumn day, through a charming inland town, some twenty-five miles from the city. Old trees shaded the old houses and old-fashioned flowers bloomed in the old gardens.

We turned a corner, rounding a large and comfortable house, and saw, standing within a porch of generous proportions at the side, a thin and fluttery elderly little Quakeress.

She was talking with a townsman, who was halting with reluctant feet, looking back longingly at a

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bundle of magazines which he had just set down, and trying to overcome his cautious frugality.

"Thee may take them or leave them, just as thee chooses," said the little Quaker lady, bringing the incident to a close with a mild peremptoriness under which the man went shamefacedly away.

It was evident that at this house, although there was no sign or announcement, something was being sold. If one thing, why not another? And it was a charming house, with charming possibilities.

And so one of us stepped inside, and the Quakeress stood smiling a greeting from the top of the few steps.

"Can you tell me if any one in this town has a claw-footed sofa, and would be willing to part with it?"

"We have one here, and are willing to sell it to thee," was the reply.

She asked us in, and called her husband.

And we saw, directly facing us, set in front of a closed fireplace, precisely such a sofa as we were in search of. In every particular it answered the requirements which we had in mind. It was eight feet long, inside measurement. It was done in dark leather, however, rather worn by years of use, instead of its original covering. It was a thing of

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perfect lines and curves. It had claw feet, and above them were elaborately broad and spreading wings. Each arm was in a superb double curve, and the faces of the arms were beautifully carved in acanthus leaves, with the carving narrowing and broadening to follow the changing line of the wood. The back was elaborately carved from end to end, with a charming interrupted roll in the middle. At each end, under the lower curve of the arm, was a space for one of the old-fashioned hard cylinder pillows—a fashion of much older date than this sofa, but revived a century ago—but we discarded the pillows as the sofa was finer and in better proportion without them.

This sofa had been used by the two Quakers for thirty years, and before that had been in possession of the one from whom they obtained it for some forty-odd years; tracing back the pedigree, thus, to 1830. Previous to 1830 there is no record of it; but it could scarcely have been much more than twenty years old at that time, as it is of early Empire style.

The Quakers showed us through their house; they had decided to sell what they had, and give up housekeeping, although they had been housekeeping all their married life. We went from room to room,



The Empire Sofa, with Winged-claw Feet, and carefully graduated Acanthus Carvings. It is eight feet long and has unusually graceful curves in the arms and back

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and up waxed stairs, and saw old-time bits at every turn, on every side. And again we thought, what quantities of old furniture still exist, when this house, found so entirely by lucky fortune, was but one out of many.

The sofa was not the only article that was obtained from them. We secured a high-boy, well over the century mark in age, and worthy of its name, it being more than six feet high. It is of walnut, with wealth of drawers graduated in size. Bandy-legged it is, and has web feet; web as distinguished from claw, the rib of the toes being indicated instead of completely carved; a style often used on fine old pieces from their being considered less breakable than the claw-and-ball.

And now, here is the strangest part of a strange story. The two Quakers sold scarcely anything besides what they sold to us. Ready to dispose of their old treasures as they were, they were ready for a short time only. Whatever had turned them in that direction was so soon and so completely altered as to cause them to decide to keep their home and all their household goods, after all. Surely an old-furniture providence watches over the ardent collector.

They felt no regret for having sold to us; at least, if they did they stoutly maintained to the contrary,

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and they wished nothing undone that had been done. Only no more was to be sold, whether to ourselves or to any one else.

And we found that we had made two delightful friends, of tastes congenial; friends whom it is a pleasure to meet and to hear from. "We were sorry to have missed you the other afternoon"—in such wise writes the old gentleman. "Come again; come again on the first day of the week. For in the Friends' calendar the first day of the week is consecrated to the social amenities."





CHAPTER X

IN VIRGINIA AND DELAWARE

IT was eighty-seven years ago that Sydney Smith penned his famous gibe upon all American books and statuary and plays and pictures; though why he should have been so sweeping is not altogether apparent, for in the very year that he wrote his gibe there died an American painter, Benjamin West, a native of Pennsylvania, who had been honored with membership in the academies of Florence, Bologna and Parma and had been president of the Royal Academy.

At least the witty Englishman said nothing in criticism of American furniture; although he probably did not know that there had been many an American cabinet-maker who had done fine and artistic work. Nor was all the work merely copies of forms from abroad, for the American alertness and originality of spirit caused the adaptation and alteration

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of English, Dutch and French forms, and even their improvement, as with the shapes of Empire when that style was declining in Europe.

In both the North and the South a great proportion of the furniture was made by native cabinet-makers, even before the Revolution; and after the war importation still more decreased.

In the South, however, the proportion of native-made furniture was never so great as in the North, and therefore in the South there is more probability of finding specimens of English, Dutch or French manufacture, more likelihood of picking up an English Chippendale or Sheraton or a French Empire instead of one of American make.

The lists of cabinet-makers of a century or more ago in the different cities do not, at first sight, seem to bear out the idea of a distinct difference in the two sections of the country in the matter of furniture making, for comparison of the number of Charleston cabinet-makers with those of Boston, or those of New York with those of Baltimore, does not exhibit any marked unlikeness. But the shops in the Northern cities averaged a larger size, or at least more of an annual output; and, more important than this, there were great numbers of makers of furniture scattered through a host of little towns

IN VIRGINIA AND DELAWARE

and villages in New York and Pennsylvania and New England, whereas in the South there were comparatively few outside of the larger places.

There was some degree of importation into Virginia and the Carolinas, from the other side of Mason and Dixon's line, but this was never extremely popular; if furniture was to be imported it might as well be imported from Europe; the sense of close and personal and friendly connection with England endured in the South much longer than in the North.

A narrow and uncompromising critic, writing two hundred years ago of his impressions of Virginia, and not understanding that a region of plantations could not fairly be expected to manufacture as much as other parts of the country, complained bitterly of the Virginians that "though their country be overrun with wood, yet they have all their wooden ware from England—their cabinets, chairs, tables, stools, chests." Less of it remains than might be expected from the splendid furnishings recorded of some of the great houses. But those were the exceptions, and as an offset many a house went bare enough. After all, the greatest amount of old furniture, as a total, in the Northern States and Colonies, was in the homes of the middle class; a class which, practically, did not exist in the South.

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That Washington, at Mount Vernon, had chairs alone that were valued at nearly seven hundred dollars, does not imply that Virginia was filled to overflowing with fine chairs.

And there is a grim reason why much of the splendid furniture that once existed in the South has disappeared—that is, the ravages of two wars. In this respect almost all of the South was more or less affected.

In Northern Georgia, along the line of Federal advance, it may almost be said that scarcely a house of importance was left standing, and, "They do say," observed the late Henry Grady of Atlanta, at a banquet, as he turned to General Sherman, "that you were rather careless with fire!"

In the vicinity of Harper's Ferry, where old houses were allowed to remain they were mostly stripped of old furniture; and the region where Grant and Lee struggled was sadly devastated.

Now and then a piece escaped destruction by a curious chance. A family in Charleston proudly preserves a fine bookcase whose drawers are not the original ones—those having been destroyed by the British, who used them as horse-troughs!

Naturally, in the War of the Revolution the North also suffered; and an angry letter from Han-

IN VIRGINIA AND DELAWARE

cock, he of the great signature, voices his lament that British officers, using his house, had "defaced and removed" his carpets! "And I must submit," he bitterly concludes. One wonders what he would have done and said if his house had been burned, as were those along the coast of Long Island Sound, in the foray of Arnold, or those of the lower part of New York City during the British occupation.

And the South, lamenting with justice the destruction by fire in the wars, at least escaped one experience of old Marblehead, where, one wild winter in the middle of the Revolutionary War, snow fell so deeply that the people were unable to obtain wood and were forced to burn even chests of drawers and other furniture.

But in the South, in spite of the extirpatory experiences of war added to the usual wear and tear of time, there are great numbers of fine pieces still to be found. Even the most fortunate collector must not hope to come upon some piece of the seventeenth century, as he may still hope to do in New England; but he may find wide variety and richness of beauty.

And one must not confine his search only to houses of age or pretension. As with the man with the heirlooms in the cabin near the battlefield, there are things to be found in shabby places, the original

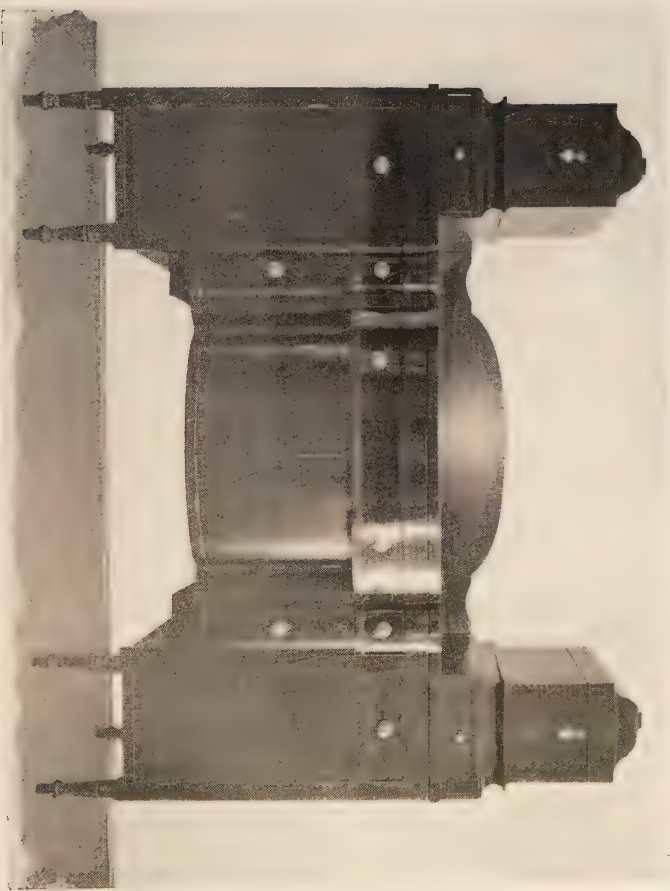
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houses having been destroyed; and in many a negro cabin there may be found some broken, almost worn-out, but still beautiful, specimen of attractive old furniture.

This came about with perfect naturalness. A piece of furniture past its usefulness, ready to be replaced by a new piece, would not be made into kindling, would not be put away in a corner of the barn. It would be passed ahead to favored slaves, just as coats and dresses were tossed to them. Most of the furniture so given away has been completely worn out and destroyed; but enough remains to be a highly desirable object of search. And, besides what was given to the colored folk in the days of prosperity, they gathered and took to their huts many a piece when the mansions were looted and destroyed. Negroes are apt to be careless in breaking and handling furniture in their own homes, but at the same time they have a curious instinct for preserving things, even when broken, hence the value of this hint in regard to their possession of ancient pieces.

One of our tilting-tables, a real beauty, came from a negro home in Virginia; it was in sad shape, but capable of repair.

And from a cabin in Virginia there came one of



Sheraton Sideboard, showing knife-boxes in place

IN VIRGINIA AND DELAWARE

the very finest sideboards that we have ever seen; much like, in general design, the beautiful one in the collection at Stenton.

It is of mahogany, of Sheraton type, and has felicitous recesses and charming curves and manifold drawers.

It was discovered in its sordid condition and environment by a friendly acquaintance of ours, in whom age had not withered enthusiasm. He purchased it for two dollars—two dollars!—and sent it to his home in the North.

It was a melancholy wreck. One of the delicate fluted legs was broken off and lost. Much of the sideboard was a smear of molasses and bacon and grease. The deep receptacles for wine bottles had long been used as bins for corn meal and brown sugar, and had been cut and slivered by scoops and spoons. There was ruin and uncleanness. It required elaborate repairing and entire polishing. But when the repairing and polishing were done the sideboard was a beauty!

The fortunate finder was old. Knowing that we wished to possess just such a sideboard as this, he said that it should come to us at his death. We did not know him intimately; there was but the friendly tie of fellow-collectors. So there was no thought of

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taking it as a gift. And, indeed, there were relatives in regard to whom he wished to present a clear front financially. So he told his intended executor the very reasonable sum that was to be paid by us for the sideboard upon his death.

Meanwhile we came to know, and to smile at, the whimsy of certain friends of ours who, waiting for the death of a distant relative who was to bequeath them her library, took unto themselves no books whatever, although, their relative being but fifty years of age, they passed by many a need and many a chance.

But it did not occur to us that we were leaning upon a still more fragile reed. Sideboards flashed before our vision, desirable sideboards, Heppelwhite, Empire and nondescript, which we might have had for the metaphorical song; but we would none of them, waiting as we were for the still more beautiful one! But we learned never to put off till to-morrow what can be bought to-day.

We went abroad; in our absence the intended executor died; our kindly acquaintance himself then died; there was no written memorandum of his intention; and, one of his distant relatives becoming executor, took such a fancy to the sideboard that he bought it in for himself!

IN VIRGINIA AND DELAWARE

And so, we who had so well learned the necessity of acting when a bargain offers, had not only, through no fault of ours, lost that most desirable sideboard, but, distinctly through our own fault, had let slip opportunities to obtain something nearly as good.

Although there is general harmony of style in the furniture of the North and the South, there are at the same time some interesting differences. New Orleans, though not so rich in the old as would be expected from its history and from the extent of its old French Quarter, still shows more of the furniture of Louis Quinze and Louis Seize than does any other part of the country. In the South there are more couch-chairs than in the North; the *chaise-longue* of the French, long and narrow, with a piece like a chair-back at one end. In the South, too, there are more of what are known as double-chairs, a self-descriptive name. In Virginia and Maryland one may sometimes find an Empire sideboard, with a mirror at the back. There are more corner-cupboards in the South with glass in the front of the lower half of the cupboard, than in the North; although it is not customary with Southerners to term them corner-cupboards, but *beaufaits* or *buffets*; *bo-fat* being a customary local pronunciation in Virginia. The

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dinner-wagon, too, may be considered a Southern institution and name, it being a double-decker side-table.

In a Virginia house, in the lower Shenandoah region, we came across an old lustre pitcher of unusual size. It held at least a quart and a pint, instead of being of the small capacity of most of the pitchers of this ware. The owner, an old man living solitary there, was glad to sell it for a dollar.

But, noticing something in the bottom, beneath the accumulated dust of years, one of us took it out and handed it to him. It was a piece of linen lace and a pair of knitting needles.

A change came over the old man's face. He spoke in a low voice, with a sort of awe. "This is what my wife was working on when——" And as he turned the pieces over, and looked at them and at the pitcher in which they had so long been hidden, his mind was busy with the past. It was clear, too, that he would be heartbroken at losing, now, that old pitcher which his wife had used for that final putting away: a putting away which was to have been but for an hour or two! He did not ask that we consider the sale unmade; but when the pitcher was offered to him again he eagerly grasped it, with a grievous sort of joy

IN VIRGINIA AND DELAWARE

It was also not far from the Shenandoah, ravaged as the entire region was by war, that we discovered half a dozen old blue sugar-bowls, in a row upon a window sill. And each bowl had a hole in its bottom! No; nothing to do with war or soldiers—it was only that the owner had made them into flowerpots!

In the ever delightful Old Dominion, there are many fascinating and romantic houses which have withstood time and war. Some of them are shattered, unrestored, still in disrepair, waiting for happier days; as, one of the most famous old mansions, with wainscoting and wine cellars and broad staircases and oak floors and many-paned windows, where the present occupants have a tin bath-tub suspended by rope and pulley from the ceiling of the hall. The explanation is divertingly simple. It is because of leaky roof and rains! During a long storm, that tub is likely to be more than once filled, and each time, as the water reaches the running over point, it is lowered and emptied and drawn up again—and all without a particle of embarrassment on the part of any one, but as if the whole world were in the habit of thus treating leaks!

In the vicinity of old Smithfield, that little town famous for its hams and its church by Sir Christo-

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pher Wren, there are many things to be found. And, indeed, the whole region round about Williamsburg, the early capital of the Commonwealth, repays a search. It is fitting that in a town where there is a "Palace Green," and a "Duke of Gloucester Street," there should still be some of the fine old houses; it is fortunate that this ancient Colonial region was not so greatly harried and burned in the Civil War. And a most slender-legged Heppelwhite card-table (one of a pair), with charming curves, discovered upon the side porch of a house, with a water bucket set upon it, shows that here, as in so many places, it is a matter of keeping ever on the alert.

It was from a negro cabin hereabouts that we secured a good brass candlestick.

"But is n't there a pair of them?"

"Yes, suh," the young negro woman drawled, "but it 's in the pickle barrel."

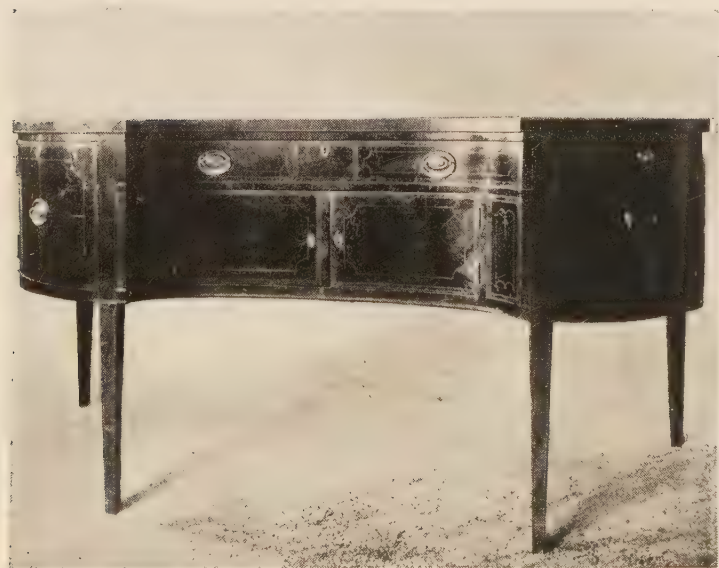
"Lost, you mean?"

"No, suh; gran'ma's a pow'ful han' at makin' pickles; they ain't nobody makes 'em as green!" she said proudly. "An' she greens 'em by keepin' the can'lestick in among 'em, suh!"

Delaware, it would almost seem, is too small a State to consider very specially; but it is temptingly



A pair of card tables, inlaid in satinwood; one of them "found on a porch with a water bucket"



An inlaid Heppelwhite sideboard

Heppelwhite Furniture. from Virginia

IN VIRGINIA AND DELAWARE

easy of access from some of the large cities, and its very smallness has preserved it from too close an examination by collectors. The entire State gives the impression of being one long sloping bank, rising easily from the water and dotted with houses, many of them old.

Not every one, however, can hope to be so fortunate there as a friend, a Western man, who went into Delaware distinctly on a search for the old, and picked up a set of eight beautiful Sheraton chairs, two of them armchairs, for a dollar and a quarter each!

This friend, a professional man in active practice in a Western city, has an admirable method of procedure. He takes a trip every year or so into some old-furniture region, carefully choosing the most promising place. Some little time before he goes he has a newspaper of that neighborhood, usually the principal newspaper of a county seat, insert a notice that he wishes to procure an old table, a chest of drawers, a sideboard, or whatever he most desires. Answers to his advertisement are to be addressed to his initials, in care of the newspaper, so that those who reply will have no idea that he is a man out of the West, for that would materially increase the prices, human nature being what it is.

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He goes to the town; he inquires for his letters at the newspaper office. The editor is almost always glad to gossip with him about furniture in the vicinity, feeling that he has been taken into his confidence. He goes to see those whose answers promise well; and, with all this as a foundation, he is likely to find precisely what he is looking for, and at least gains a wide knowledge of the furniture of that particular countryside.

Delaware is not among the most beautiful of the States; but there hangs about it an all-pervasive odor of peaches, and the thought brings up the memory of the sight of endless lines of heaping peach baskets, set out in the market centres to which the peach growers resort.

We feel warm and cordial toward the little State, for it has been good to us, in furniture, out of all proportion to its size, even though we did not have our friend's luck in finding Sheraton chairs.

We gathered a charming pair of candlesticks, of brass, small, and with fluted pillars, for but thirty cents each. And a candle-stand, of mahogany, of exquisitely dainty shape—wanting one foot out of three, but that was a small matter—cost but half a dollar. It is always a pleasure to find a "bargain," if you do not have to feel that you have "beaten

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down," but that the seller is as pleased as yourself with the price.

We remember, too, besides various old houses of the State, a shop surely unique—an auction shop whose proprietor is of spiritual kin to the old furniture men of Pennsylvania and New York of whom we have already told;—an auction shop which is a succession of warerooms of old furniture; not, all of it, old in the sense of being Colonial or Empire, but where, in this room or that, you come upon some real treasure which the proprietor has gathered in and which he is in no hurry to sell. Through one room after another, one wanders back through the unpretentious establishment, and must surely come away with something desirable. For our part, we secured a mahogany low-boy, inlaid with satin-wood. It is a straight-legged Heppelwhite, with two drawers at either side and one across the top, and an arching opening for the knees. It was a wreck, as is usual with the pieces of this type of dealer.

And we have, too, from Delaware, a corner washstand, a dainty Sheraton; and in Delaware we also secured an old-time washbowl to fit the opening in the stand.

Throughout much of the South it is possible to pursue a line of collecting which admirably supple-

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ments that of old furniture; in a broad sense it is really furniture.

In many a little village, and in many an isolated mountain home, the old-time art of making patchwork coverlets is remembered and practised. Some may be found that are generations old; others are new, but made in precisely the old-time way, and after the same patterns.

Many are in gorgeous colors, in glowing yellows and greens and purples; and, being a matter of housewifely pride, they are often thrown with ostentatious carelessness over the "gallery rail" so that their glory may be seen.

At a little inn at King's Mountain, not far from the famous battlefield, the bed of state had upon it precisely nineteen coverlets! There was no thought that any mortal could or would sleep beneath such a padded mountain. But it was the most natural method of display, and an admirable talent and an admirable display it was. Each quilt had its name. There were the Western Star, the Rose of the Carolinas, the Log Cabin, the Virginia Gentleman, the Fruit Basket, the Lily of the Valley—in short, there were just as many special names as there were designs. We wonder how many have been added since we were there!



CHAPTER XI

IN MASSACHUSETTS AND CONNECTICUT

WE know of a dear old gentleman, the rector of a church in a neighborhood where a thinnish stream of association has enriched the soil with a mild growth of historical interest, who possesses a hand-saw and a love for the old. With this love for the old goes a generosity, whimsical as it is broad, which leads him to wish to share his treasures with all the world. And therein lies the utility of the saw!

Let there but be the felling of a tree under which some notability once passed or rested, and he will saw off graceful sections of the wood and mail them, each one carefully labeled, to a myriad of his friends (and every one who knows him is his friend), so that they may share with him in the possession of such a memento.

Let there be the tearing down of a building in

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which some man of note lived or made a speech or was married or did some other of the many things by which men of note render buildings of interest, and he will acquire sundry oaken beams, and indefatigably use his hand-saw, and elaborately label and mail, so that, again, the world may share with him in his treasure.

Once, so great were his enthusiasm and his generosity, he even sawed into little bits, and mailed, an old settle upon which a man of distinction had once sat! It was badly broken, he explained; too badly ever to be of use; and from his description it seems to have been one of those settles, with long, high, solid backs and fine carving, which, because of their protection against draughts, were long in common use in front of fireplaces, but were practically displaced, a little more than a century ago, by double-chairs and settees.

Some one may have represented to the kindly rector the iconoclastic sin of destroying old furniture even by a parson's saw, or he may never have found another piece which in his opinion defied repair; at any rate, that was the one time we have heard of in which his saw and his generosity were busy with more than beams and trees.

Necessarily, there is diversity as to what consti-



Walnut double-chair; in Massachusetts



Settee; with shell carving on the cabriole legs

Two Fine Chippendale Designs

MASSACHUSETTS AND CONNECTICUT

tutes a valuable relic of the past, and how that relic should be treated. In a Connecticut town, one of the old residents proudly preserves and displays a pair of buckskin breeches worn by one of his forbears in a Revolutionary skirmish within the borders of the State. The relic is not quite intact, the present possessor explaining that the circular hole was cut by himself, when a lad, to furnish forth a needful cover for his baseball—that is, what we should now call a baseball, although when he was a boy it was the ball used in one-old-cat or long-ball, or perhaps rounders.

Connecticut, at the present time, is one of the very best States for the satisfactory search for old furniture. It does not have so much as Pennsylvania; but among the smaller States it has probably the most. In early days, Massachusetts had more than any other State; but in Massachusetts the museums and the collectors have been more active than anywhere else, and there has been a consequent depletion of the total of possible acquisitions.

There are a great number of Colonial dwellings in existence in Connecticut. There are a host of houses, old and new, where Colonial articles are still to be found. And the frequency of intermarriage, in a considerable portion of the State, and the free-

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dom of the descendants of the original population from outside influences, have served to strengthen the conservative spirit; and, a conservative spirit always tending toward preservation, alike of things material and tangible as of principles and ideas, it is not to be wondered at that many homes and much furniture have been saved.

The first President, within a few months after his inauguration, took a trip through a considerable part of New England, driving with his carriage and four horses; and of Connecticut he wrote with curious detail, observing the absence of the very rich and the very poor, and noting that the general type of Connecticut house had a door in the middle and a staircase facing the door, each house being from twenty to thirty feet in width and from thirty to fifty in length, exclusive, as he whimsically wrote, of "a back shed, which seems to be added as the family increases."

The State still possesses in a general way that ancient desideratum of neither poverty nor riches, although some of the wealth of New York has flowed over its borders and the advance of civilization has brought its inevitable accompaniment of poverty; but from Washington's rather dry description of the Connecticut houses their charm and proportions

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would scarcely be understood. Washington was raised amid the traditions of the finest Southern homes, vastly improved in appearance as they were by their setting in the midst of luxuriant estates and rich plantations, and the stony fields of Connecticut were bleak to his eyes and insensibly detracted from the aspect of the houses as well. And, too, he was in the humor, on that driving trip, to see things in dry and dubious light, for New England as a whole had not welcomed the new Constitution and Government—Governor Hancock of Massachusetts tried to snub him and Rhode Island had so acted that he refused to enter its borders—and his trip was itself but a politic effort, hesitatingly made, to secure harmony among the Thirteen. Had he seen and written of Connecticut at a happier time he would have been impressed by the alluring roads, the low-rounding hills, the loosely-piled stone walls separating field from field, and the white houses, charmingly built, gambrel roofed, primly porticoed, shaded by mighty trees.

And in loitering over these fascinating roads one comes to learn that there is not only much of the material, the actual, that has been preserved, but that there are also interesting survivals of the ways and the customs of the past.

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For in many a town and hamlet the old cottage industries are carried on. And to find them is like finding, in English Westmoreland, women weaving linen as it was woven there by women of centuries ago.

In many a Connecticut cottage baskets are made, of splints, of ancient manner of manufacture and of ancient shape; so strong, these baskets, that the handles defy the hardest pulling. And we bought, one day, a quaint basket, of old-fashioned design, which the sweet-faced ancient woman who sold it said had been made "for carrying cakes to church socials." What a sermon lies in that text! The simplicity of it all, the primitiveness, the nonrealization of anything out of the way or uncommon! Baskets of that shape had been so long made for the carrying of cakes to the social gatherings of the church that they were merely a matter of course, as from time immemorial.

We said, an "ancient" woman. And indeed that was what she was. Through the operation of some inscrutable law, one never finds young folk engaged in these old-fashioned occupations. And the aged have the aspect, the manner, the skill, of such as have been thus engaged for all their lives. Where did they hide, one wonders, when they were young?

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What was it that turned their thoughts to the following of these ancient handicrafts, assuming the mantle as it dropped from those who were passing away? Whatever the explanation, the fact is always the same.

Wagon-loads of baskets leave the little villages and are peddled through the countryside for miles. Many an aged village worker makes ladders of wear-defying strength. Many an aged woman makes for sale the braided rug and the rug that is hooked—the essential feature of the latter art being the hooking of brightly colored rags through bagging.

Wonderful old counterpanes are made, of precisely the kind that were made in the first century of Connecticut history. By fine needlework, and a bewilderingly unlimited number of stitches, muslin is puffed over soft cotton into a white area of exquisite design. The women sit forever over the frames on which the counterpanes are spread. Watching a Connecticut housewife at work on such a piece, the thought irresistibly comes that, had Penelope happily had such a task during the journeyings of Ulysses, it would have kept her sufficiently engaged during even so lengthy an absence as his without having to undo any of the work at night. It is considered exceedingly modest, even in a region of modest

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prices, to charge four dollars for merely marking out, on the cotton, the pattern of a good counterpane.

Many an old man puts rush or splint seats in chairs; and a very pretty art it is, with much of curious skill and lore. Rushes, the old men will tell you, must be gathered only in June. And the difference between a bottom of rush and a bottom of flag, or cat-tail, is not always apparent from the upper surface, but, turning the chair upside down, is at once to be seen, the distinction lying in the matter of the strips being round or flat.

Connecticut is the home of the old "banjo" clock, as well as of the tall clock with wooden works, but these two industries have vanished with that of the wooden nutmeg.

It is in Connecticut that the weaving of rag carpets continues to be an art. And in one little cottage, far from a railroad, where the rags must be sent by stage, if sent by any but the people round about, we discovered a weaver who will weave (and did weave for us) a pair of really beautiful silk rugs, two and a half yards in length, for three dollars!—the rags being supplied to him but he furnishing the warp and cutting and sewing the rags and hemming the ends.

In a State where so much of the old-time handi-

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craft work is continued as a business, it is natural that there should be considerable continuance of the old-fashioned as ordinary household occupations. Old women may be seen, working out of doors, beside great kettles of brass or of iron which are suspended between forked sticks over blazing fires, and busy with the mysteries of various dyes for carpeting or clothes; with logwood or butternut or indigo. Many a household makes its own soap; an admirable hard, dry product, compounded of fat and potash. Here and there is a household that still molds its own candles; and we learned of a woman, old and indigent, who still makes the primitive dip! The ancient method of scouring pots and pans with equisetum, the horse-tail, otherwise known as "Dutch rush" or "scouring rush," valuable from its granules of silica, has not been forgotten. And there are still Connecticut housewives who know how to bleach beeswax in the traditional way.

It is a pretty thing to see this. A kettle of yellow beeswax is warmed into fluidity and set upon a table. Beside it stands a bucket of cold spring water. The woman dips her hand in the water; then plunges the hand into the beeswax; withdrawing it quickly, it is covered with wax which, owing to the water, slips off like a glove. She hangs this glove

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of yellow wax on a line in the sunshine; she hangs another and another; the bright sun bleaches them gradually to a pure white; and then all are thrown into the kettle again, and melted down, and the product is white beeswax.

And, added to all these things, Connecticut is the home of the old-time County Fair. Here it is in its glory, in variety of little and big, from the great fair whose week shows an attendance of tens of thousands to the little and oftentimes more interesting ones where the exhibits are simple and the attendance can be estimated by hundreds.

There are fine old towns along the Sound, and toward Rhode Island, that hold much treasure of old furniture. New Haven is particularly rich in such possessions. And there are inland sections, and some in the direction of the New York line, away from the railroads, that go sleepily on as if not knowing that the twentieth century has come knocking at their doors. Here and there in the untouched portions of the State are villages which look precisely as they must have looked before the Revolution; and in such places the furniture seeker is optimistically cheerful whenever a fan-light swims into his ken.

The finding of old-fashioned things possesses

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somewhat of the erraticalness of wireless telegraphy. A piece of old furniture may be discovered in the locality where one would most naturally look for it, or, like a wireless message, it may be picked up quite unexpectedly, at a distance from any point where it logically belongs.

But in spite of delightfully erratic chances which so often put things in the path of the collector in unanticipated places, the most natural neighborhoods for finding ancient treasures are those where the things were commonly made and used by everyone; and it is for this reason that Connecticut and Massachusetts are so well worthy of close scrutiny.

In an old Massachusetts house there was recently a quantity of old furniture, and an acquaintance of ours determined to acquire it.

"But the owner is worth half a million dollars!" came a neighbor's alarmed warning.

"That so? But I don't want his money—I just want his furniture!" And he got what he wanted.

There is unbounded wealth of old furniture in Massachusetts. As a Colony, and as a State in the early days of the Republic, it contained more pieces, in quantity, than any other. But the field has been worked with a zeal commensurate with the value and with the vast number of potential prizes,

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and the summer colonists have vied with collectors in carrying the quest into almost every corner. And yet, so much existed here that it has been impossible for collectors, museums and summer colonists, indefatigable though they have been, to find and appropriate all that is capable of being acquired. It is still an admirable field.

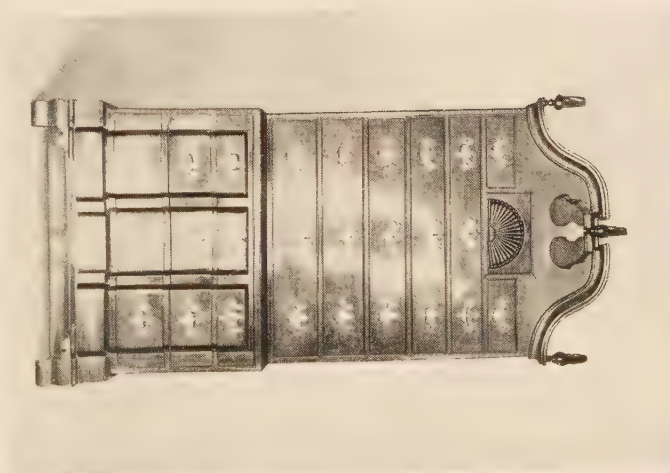
Some years ago, in the ancient town which is of greater historical interest than any other in the State except Boston, we met an aged man who was custodian, in his own house, of the local museum. Most of the pieces belonged to him personally and numerous others had been loaned to him, for at his death the town was to become the owner and custodian. His mind had begun to grow a little dim, but the passion for collecting, that had been his one passion since his youth, was still as strong as ever. Moving gently toward the close of a long life, his fading eyes looked lovingly over the treasures he had amassed. No miser ever felt keener delight in counting gold. And yet, he was no miser. Under no consideration would he sell to anyone; but it was from him that there came to us as a gift, the cup of Major Buttrick.

In every part of his large house there was a massing of all varieties of household belongings. There were corner-cupboards, some made to stand detached,



High-boy, taken from Connecticut to the Western Reserve, a hundred years ago, in an ox-cart. Made about 1750

Old New England Pieces, showing "Willow" Brasses and Carved "Rays of the Sun"



Massachusetts chest-on-chest, with block-front lower drawers. Made about 1730

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others which had been built into the walls of old houses. China filled the cupboards, and in one was what many consider the finest lot of Lowestoft in the United States.

He did not, indeed, realize the full value of everything. It was enough for him to collect the old; it was for others to divide and sub-divide into grades of interest. It was a town legend that, regarding this very Lowestoft, some one commented with a cry of surprise upon what it was. "What a lot of Lowestoft!"

Whereupon he responded, with a look of high displeasure, that it was not "low stuff"; it had been Mrs. So-and-so's "very best china"!

Beginning to collect, in an old neighborhood, long before the general era of furniture collecting, he was able to gather numerous specimens of the earliest forms. For example, he had some of the earliest bureaus, or low chests of drawers, of which scarcely any are known of as existing previous to 1750, as before that time armoires and chests and tall cupboards were used. The bureaus became so rapidly popular that many were in service by the time of the Revolution, and a vast number by 1800, many having claw-and-ball feet, and fluted columns at the sides, and charming serpentine fronts, and perhaps even panels

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of satin-wood set in the midst of the mahogany. This style of furniture, as well as others, could be studied in his collection, and he loved to speak of points which to him seemed important. One might smile at some of his classifications, but no one could smile at his ability to find and secure precious things.

That he freely offered us the privilege of sleeping in a room that was so crowded with antiques that there was scarcely space to move, and of sleeping there in a Jacobean four-poster which he believed had come over in one of the trips of the Mayflower, was the crowning proof of his love for fellow collectors—but the room and the bed were of so extraordinary a mustiness that we declined the privilege.

Another Massachusetts town, Salem, is dear to memory, not only from its treasures of the past but from being the place where, Westerners that we at that time were, we first saw a grandfather's clock ticking away, in a private house, in the very corner in which it had ticked through the Revolution.

In another old house, locally known as that of Roger Williams, were some Windsor chairs of particularly fine proportions, weather-beaten out of all color and so worn on their "saddle-seats" that the tops of the front legs were in sight; and these chairs remain with the clock, in our memory, because of

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their having been the first of that design which we actually handled.

In a corner of this old town, we secured two very fine old sugar bowls for the sum of twenty-five cents apiece; and these two bowls are among the prized smaller pieces of our belongings.

Among the beautiful Berkshire Hills one's first feeling is that there can be nothing left to find in a region so dotted with summer homes. One is tempted to give over, for once, all thought of acquiring ancient things, and to resign oneself to the fascination of a peculiarly charming hill country.

And yet it was in the very heart of the Berkshires that we discovered the old mirror as the cupboard door of the tool shed!

We stayed for some time in one of the many old houses, which, in New Jersey, are invariably termed "Washington's Headquarters," but which in all the other Twelve, including Massachusetts, are usually and modestly set down as "houses where Washington slept." A comfortable, gable-roofed house, this, now used as an inn, with a monster chimney in the very heart of it, opening with hospitable fireplaces into various rooms; and, even if it may not have been drowded into fame by our first President (and, after all allowances for the necessity of his having to sleep

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somewhere for the many nights of his lifetime, a too ready credulity of sleeping tales would make him out as a descendant of all Seven of the Sleepers), it has at least been slept in by a more recent President, and from its felicitous location upon a hillside it looks out upon a winding road, a delightful little stream, and a scene of radiant charm. And in this old house, among other reminders of the past, were a four-poster, two sets of andirons, three fine mirrors, one Empire and two of them Constitution, and wealth of blue dishes!

Again showing, all this, that everywhere, even in those regions where one would least expect antiquities to remain, they are still to be found. And, as always, where they are to be found, there are constantly recurrent chances to obtain them.

But at least in Boston, one is liable faintheartedly to think, there can be nothing obtainable. There are, however, antique shops in Boston, with good and bad, genuine and imitation. And there are many private houses in which are great numbers of desirable articles; and always, from time to time, there are such changes of ownership, such dying out of families, such dispersion of goods from one reason or another, as to give the watchful collector opportunities.

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And there is still a distinctly ancient quarter of Boston; a neighborhood where old houses nod sleepily toward one another across narrow ways, where many a "bull's eye" of the primitive glass-makers is to be seen, and where, although most of the old-time furniture and fittings have been removed, leaving the habitations to the occupancy of folk who are not precisely to be deemed descendants of Alden and Priscilla, there are still some things to be found.

In one of the oldest houses, now occupied by Russian Jews, we came upon a superbly beautiful shell-top corner-cupboard, but so built into the wall as to involve very considerable expense in removal, even were permission to be gained and the piece purchased. We found the room used as a kitchen by the thronging inhabitants of the building, and the cupboard was a sad and unclean wreck; yet it showed, again, that hope should spring eternal in the collector's breast.

Of all the States, Massachusetts is the one in which the study of old furniture from examples can most satisfactorily be pursued.

Not only in Boston are there fine collections to be seen; furniture in museums and in place in historical buildings; but other towns also have splendid accumulations. There is the fascinating display of

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the Essex Institute, at Salem; there is the old furniture gathered at Concord; there is the collection at ancient Plymouth, where, in spite of poetical declamation, the breaking waves did not dash high nor is the coast rock-bound; and there are the valuable collections of Worcester, Deerfield, and other places.

One may study the cabriole legs and shell ornamentation that were new and fashionable in the time of Queen Anne—new, in a sense only, for the bandy-leg first came from China, in the ships of Dutch traders. One may study old chairs, and begin to realize the general truth of the saying that the heavier the underbracing the greater the age! One may see, too, that chairs were not at all common until the Cromwellian era and the feeling of equality that came in with his Commonwealth; for, before that, stools and forms were usual for all except the head of the house. One may find original old chairs in Spanish leather—a type frequently counterfeited nowadays, with convincing display of disrepair and raggedness. And in collections such as these may be seen early upholstered chairs—upholstery having come originally from Venice, the city of wealth and luxury—and, by contrast, early English and American chairs with solid splats, and then the earlier simple splats preceding the beautiful ones of Chippendale.

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Brass handles, too, may profitably be studied in these collections, if the collector has passed the first stages of what has to be learned; but, interesting though this branch is, and often valuable in fixing an otherwise doubtful date, it is so involved by the frequent use of old handles on new pieces and new handles upon old pieces that deductions are liable to confuse rather than enlighten.

So much, in collections like those of Massachusetts, tells of history as well as age; so much is connected with people whose names are household words; that the pleasure of examination and study is greatly enhanced.

The collector will not find things labelled Jacobean or Elizabethan, Adam or Heppelwhite, Chippendale or Sheraton. Such distinctions he must learn elsewhere. But he will learn the most valuable secrets of all; he will learn, by comparison of dates, what shapes go with certain periods, and what shapes lap over from one period to another; and he will train his eye.

And, supplementary to what may be learned in important collections, there are books, like the edition of "Cranford" which is illustrated by Hugh Thomson and the edition of "Elia" illustrated by Charles E. Brock, which set one back into the very

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atmosphere of the past, for the pictures are made from sympathy and full knowledge, and show old-fashioned rooms just as they were really furnished and lived in, and the characters costumed in the old-time way.





CHAPTER XII

THE EASTERN SHORE

THE Eastern Shore! What suggestive power these words have! What visions of hospitable living they conjure up!

And there is such delightful arrogance in the name. It is as if all the other eastern shores are of no account; as if, literally, they do not exist, and as if everyone must instantly comprehend that, when the Eastern Shore is mentioned, there is no possibility that anything but that part of Maryland which lies on the eastern side of the Chesapeake can be meant.

A journey thither is but the matter of a few hours from Philadelphia, down through the peach orchards of Delaware and into the land of charm, where there are romantic houses, and far-inreaching inlets, and huge oaks, and brilliant holly bushes, and honey-

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suckle, and where, with unexpected appreciation of the highest demands of "local color," scarlet tanagers now and then flit across the white shell roads.

We chose at random for our stopping place, a town, a county seat, whose name had a pleasing sound. It proved to be a quaint old place, with houses whose dormer windows suggested attic treasure and whose roofs of shingle were green with heavy moss.

Yet there were not many houses of real distinction within the town itself for it had been the custom, with most of the families of prominence, to live away from the towns in houses facing tidewater and surrounded by broad acres.

Buzzards were much in evidence too; an affable, amicable, neighborly breed, who loiteringly fly over the fields or perch in unostentatious lines upon back fences. Colored folk give the impression of being all-pervasive; and, as in other parts of the South, there is considerable old furniture in their possession, although perhaps so dilapidated as to be beyond repair.

A Heppelwhite sideboard, with two legs missing, was propped up in the shed of a negro family, in the outskirts of the town. The brass handles had disappeared, but a nail projected from each drawer in

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equivalence. Seed-corn, and mule medicine, and bits of old iron, were in the drawers. But we did not seriously consider its rejuvenation, as at that time we were anticipating the possession of a side-board from another part of the country.

At the edge of the shaded green beside the courthouse, black men and women were seated in rows, selling their wares in public market. Such shad there was, and such oysters! A basket was all that each one had and the emptying of that meant a prosperous day's work. The residents were out getting supplies. Men who gave critical attention to the choice of shad, and who were followed each by his old dusky servant with a lidded basket, were a common sight. A reputation for hospitality and good living is not founded on telephone orders to the butcher.

The warm spring air, the line of horses at the hitching bar, the general aspect of plenty of time, the homely character of the simple market by the roadside, carried one back many years from the life of to-day. This is a sort of living which was typical of much of the South before the Revolutionary War, and one can understand the story of the colored steward who, for a dinner at the executive mansion on Cherry Hill, in New York, bought, to please Presi-

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dent Washington, an early shad, for two dollars—but only to have it coldly ordered away as a rebuke for such extravagance.

But, fascinating as were the roads and the trees and the water, the shad and the oysters, the poke-weed shoots and the baskets of beaten biscuits, we had not gone to the Eastern Shore altogether for perishable delights or for scenery.

After a general look about the town we came again to the business street. The shops were close together, and there were stationers and booksellers, and vendors of needles and pins, the modern idea of consolidation not having penetrated here.

Along the thin brick pavement, under the wooden awnings which extended over the sidewalk and rested upon curbstone rods, we walked slowly on, until, just beyond the onions and radishes of a green-grocer, we caught sight of an Empire sideboard, upon whose front and ends and top the polish had whitened under the influence of drip from the awning.

It came to us that this must be the sideboard of which our innkeeper, garrulously discoursing of old furniture for our behoof, had told. “He bought my grandfather’s sideboard at a sale, suh, and wanted to sell it to me for four dollars! And I told him I would give him three dollars for it, suh, and then I



Empire Sideboard, with top from 1800-1810



From Maryland; with centre unusually high above the floor
 Empire Sideboards, with Pillars and Claw Feet

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worked up to three fifty, but we have n't come to terms yet, suh."

There were four fine columns across the front. There were three large cupboard doors. There was a claw foot at one end and a short stub, toeless and shapeless, at the other, giving it a cant forward that threw its bottle drawers open with a rakish and desperate look. At each end, under the board of the top, on pulling a brass knob, there appeared a long mahogany slide, thus increasing the already generous length very considerably. How many glasses and bottles and custard cups had been set forth on those slides! And what a clever idea it was, and one so very easily made use of.

We entered; and found that we were in the undertaking shop of the county. An old man greeted us, and told us he was tending the shop for his son, who was out. The old man liked to talk, and he told how many years he had been a cabinet-maker and how many great men of the Shore he had measured.

He was very much out of patience with the factory furniture of to-day, and with the heavy varnish put on with a brush. He was full of tales of old times and old ways, and told how Admiral B— used to have his mahogany polished. "No shellac in that house! No French polish for him! No stuff of

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that kind! Just a big cork and a darky and beeswax! That was the old Admiral's way and it's the way of the whole Eastern Shore, and it's the best way—only you can't get a darky nowadays who'll rub all day on the top of a dining table."

The sideboard at the front was spoken of, but as a piece of furniture it did not seem to please the old cabinet-maker particularly and he sniffed out that his son had bought it and wanted to sell it. "He's been offering it for four dollars but maybe he'll take less. There's a better one out in the barn, for four dollars, straight."

It soon appeared that the old man had a positive dislike for veneer; and as the Empire sideboard was veneered on its whole face, on all its panels and on the margins of doors and drawers, the reason for his dislike of the piece was sufficiently evident. And for our part, the knowledge that the innkeeper was trying to get it because of its having belonged to his grandfather was alone sufficient to restrain us from trying to make an acquisition.

The old cabinet-maker of the Eastern Shore disliked veneer because he was of what may be termed the school of Chippendale, who, although veneer was in use long before his time, notably by Boulle, and in his time, by Riesener, stoutly made all of

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his effects by solid wood alone. But Sheraton and Heppelwhite used veneer with admirable effectiveness, and the Empire workers used it even more although oftentimes to less good purpose.

There is a widespread prejudice against veneer, not based upon full knowledge, like that of the old cabinet-maker, but owing its strength to the figurative use of the word as meaning surface gloss or false pretense.

But veneer is often admirable, and whether or not it is so depends upon the motive of the cabinet-maker as well as his skill. If used as a makeshift or mask it should be condemned as false.

The top of a table or bureau is sometimes veneered to obtain the highly desired "quartered" effect, or "tree" pattern as it is sometimes called, but flat veneered surfaces are much more easily damaged than are solid tops. Water or oil spilled upon veneer is liable to raise blisters, which are serious defacements, whereas spill-marks upon solid wood are easily effaced.

But there are some curved surfaces, such as round pillars, with which beautiful effects can be secured with veneer, through the natural lines of the grain of the wood, where effectiveness would largely be lost with solid wood unless it were carved. Carving

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was used by some old-time makers where effects in veneer and inlay were depended upon by others.

There are sometimes edges and panels effectively veneered, and admirably so where the edges are protected by the surrounding wood from damage. That some of the best old furniture shows mahogany veneer upon solid mahogany, well illustrates what is meant by an honest and admirable use of veneer.

Leaving the old veneered sideboard, the cabinet-maker adjusted a bell so that it would ring when the door opened and led us back into his yard and barn.

And a great surprise was in store for us. For in the barn, half-filled as it was with hay and corn, stood nine pieces of exceptionally fine mahogany.

Near the door was a solid, dark, huge corner-cupboard, with bonnet-top; or "broken-arch" top as it is frequently termed; it being the style, introduced two hundred years ago into furniture, in which the pediment is broken by a space in the middle. The cupboard was polished by the cork and beeswax and rubbing of many years and gleamed dully amid the litter of the shabby barn. The cupboard doors were solid instead of one being of glass, and this was a distinctly unfavorable point, even though they were of good wood and of good proportions. On opening the doors, it was seen that there was a curious blem-

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ish—though a tribute, of sorts, to the good cheer that had once been there—for rats had gnawed great holes through every shelf.

Balanced with its legs in air was a small work-table with two drawers and rope-carved legs. This table had a slide below the drawers from which tatters of green silk still hung where the silk work-bag used to be, as seen so often in old-time pictures. The price of this little table was seven dollars; and this seemed curious, for it was not of so fine a style as the great corner-cupboard or as other pieces there. But the explanation was simple. It was small, and would for that reason sell more readily, for the express charges would be light. And it was ready to use except for a new silk bag.

Purchasers dread the express charges on heavy old pieces; and the amateur in collecting fears to face the world with a sideboard without a leg. A pillar gone, or an urn missing from a mirror top, sends the value sharply down in the judgment of most purchasers. A small chip in the veneer will check the otherwise ardent buyer of a chest of drawers, although it could be mended for fifty cents, or by twenty minutes' work if the purchaser would do it himself at his home.

In that shabby building, too, there was a tilting-

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table which would both revolve and tip, and which, moreover, had a raised edge to prevent cups from slipping off. A treasure, that, indeed! To be sure, the slender graceful snake feet had been painted red and the top had been roughly used for holding flower pots, but the flame of the wood still glowed, and the table could easily be restored to full beauty.

There was, too, a dining table of heavy fine dark wood; a Pembroke table—which sounds so very much better than merely to say that it had two leaves which hung almost to the floor. This is the sort of table that, if it belonged to one's grandfather, one would be glad to place in the middle of the dining room, but which, unless it have some such personal association, repels by its long and dolorously drooping leaves.

Such examples of what may be found by a stranger making a flying visit, at random, are sufficient to give an intimation of what is still to be discovered along the Eastern Shore.

It used to be not uncommon for some of the big salesrooms to say in their advertisements, that they were going to dispose at auction of carloads of "old furniture from the Eastern Shore"; and the picture of a country denuded of its treasures had begun to fix itself in our minds; and had we not known some-

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thing of the ways of advertisers we should not have had the courage to go into that particular field in search of furniture. As a matter of fact, a collection of furniture offered for sale as being from a specified locality, is likely to contain not only pieces that are genuinely from that locality, but pieces from much nearer home and even imitations and reproductions. Many a lot of furniture to which an attractive name, such as the Eastern Shore, or Beaufort, is attached, consists of the fraudulent new as well as the genuine old. It is not uncommon, too, in disposing of the belongings of some well-known collector, to augment the total with other articles, good or bad.

But, although not nearly so much as has been claimed has been taken away from the Eastern Shore by dealers, great quantities have been taken, and we deemed ourselves fortunate to discover nine good old pieces in one old barn.

While we were still in the barn, looking over the things with the old cabinet-maker, the bell jangled and we heard active approaching footsteps, and the son appeared. A wiry alert sort of man he was, and he began by saying that there was little profit in the sale of furniture in such a broken-down condition.

“What I mean to do is fix it up. If I can only

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get the time I can make these old things worth while. I was up in Baltimore last winter and I saw tables that were tables! Polished—well, I should say they were! And inlaid!—well, all along the edges there were lines, and down the legs there were rows of tapering flowers! I found where I could buy such things for inlay work and I bought a whole outfit. Just as soon as there 's a lull in our undertaking business—we 've been pretty busy, you know," he interpolated brightly—"I mean to get these old things out and fix them up. Father, here, could do it but he does n't feel like beginning at it, and anyway, we 've both been too busy."

"How much do you want for the tip-table?" he was asked.

"You can have that for three dollars. You can scrape that paint off and get the surface off the top and you 'll have a fine table and fine wood. Father taught me all he knows, and it 's no small learning when you learn cabinet-making from a man of the old school."

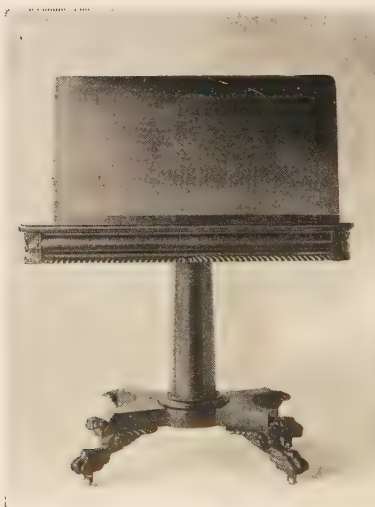
The young man turned to the hay-mow and dragged down by one leg a graceful but shattered bandy-leg table. It was of the Chippendale period or older. It had graceful curving legs, slim above the feet and ending in perfect bird's claws clasping



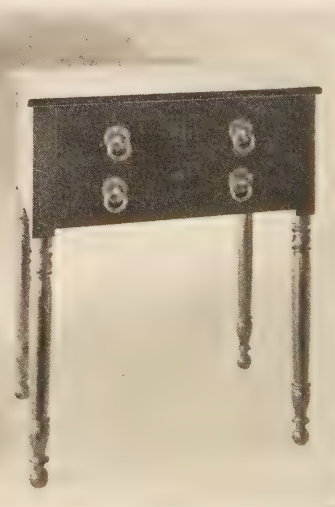
"A tilting-table which both revolves and tips"



Claw-and-ball table which cost one dollar



A winged-claw table; bought for one dollar



Simple work-table, with rosette brasses

Old Mahogany Tables

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a ball. The top was formed of what had been the extension leaves, and was fastened to the frame by coarse wooden pins. It had seen service as a drip-board for dishes and the beautiful hard wood had been made fairly fuzzy by hot water.

The top, being larger than it ought to be, had been the salvation of the graceful legs and of the claw-and-ball feet, for, projecting so far as it did, it had protected them from serious mars.

It was evident that the top was large enough and to spare for the cutting from it of a top of good proportions, and that the fuzzy surface could be planed away, thus getting down to the fine dark grain.

The young man went to his workshop, and returned with a handful of the inlays that he had told of purchasing. They looked as if they were made of yellow celluloid—or, rather, they looked like dark macaroni cut into inlay designs. There were drooping garlands of bellflower, and corner designs, and little panels for drawers, and wooden ovals for keyhole escutcheons. Such things we had seen many times in the finished products in the fine shops where Antiquities with a big A are sold, but we had not thought to handle them, loose, in an old barn on the Eastern Shore.

He laid some on the bandy-leg table. Inlays

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were pushed along the fuzzy, water-ruined top, with a suggestive hand. Memories of that Baltimore shop were crowding in his mind. It was clear that he thought the graceful old Chippendale table would look very fine smartened up with this Heppelwhite ornamentation; with an oval panel in the middle, with a heavy line all around the edge, with geometric figures at the four corners.

"Should you like to sell it as it stands?" we asked, but thinking that a man so ardent in affection for inlay would be hard to persuade to part with an opportunity of using it.

"Oh, yes. As it stands you can have it for a dollar," he said.

Of course it at once became ours, and for three dollars the tilting-table became ours too! And these were the prices at which the dealer first offered them—there was no beating down. And therefore there was again that sense of pleasure which accompanies a pleasant triumph.

"I'll see to the shipping," he added casually; "I can get time between funerals to send them to the station."

The old Pembroke table, not nearly the equal of the others in design, but with its wood in good condition, he prized more highly. And we almost felt

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like buying it to save it when he explained his reason.

“You see, a table with big wings like that has got a lot of good flat wood in it. I can get—let me see, five feet wide, eight feet the other way—I can get forty square feet of West Indian mahogany out of it. That’s where I get some money out of old furniture! I knock the leaves off, and crate them up rough and easy, and get a good price for all I can send to that man I told you of, in Baltimore.”

Leaving his shop, after securing the treasures that we most cared for, we went forth to see the country beyond the limits of the town.

A long drive over the white shell roads, past giant oaks in the fields and holly bushes gleaming with glossy green and with the blue of the broad tide-water inlets constantly coming into view, brought us in sight of many stately old homes, well placed, with terraces and groves, and always facing toward some arm of the bay.

These inlets, and the fine old homes as well, have names well chosen and old and full of charm.

The houses are a delight to any lover of the old, for not only do they outwardly possess beauty and distinction, but they have wainscoting in their halls, and twirled balustrades upon the staircases, and fire-

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places in their drawing rooms, and corner-cupboards in their dining rooms—or buffets, we should call them here on the Eastern Shore. The houses have also window seats in the bedrooms, cranes in the kitchens, and knockers on the doors, and in some of them there are quantities of fine furniture. And as to this point, one must needs bear in mind, as elsewhere in regions of fine houses, that at any time there may be a sale and a dispersion. There had been a sale at one of the great houses the winter before we were there.

We returned from our long drive thrilled and filled with the spirit of it all. Our dreams were haunted by old Gilbert Stuart gentlemen in mulberry-colored coats who sat in fireside chairs and read in the wainscoted rooms and took candles up broad and easy stairs on their way to bed.

Next day we went to a shore town with a name suggestive of green quadrangles and stone halls, and found ourselves in a small and quiet village with a number of well-kept houses, some small byways, and a willow-shaded landing. Unimportant, and far away, was the railroad. The Chesapeake was sparkling and blue; and the winding tidewater estuaries tempted with their fascination.

The inn was a rambling structure, part new and

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part old, and we were shown into the older portion, overlooking the water, and our room was one that was legendarily associated with a noted figure of Colonial and Revolutionary period; a room with wainscoted side, and a fireplace, and many elusory and annoying drafts.

Early in the morning we took a boat, the typical boat of this part of the world; a "cunner"—thus the Shore pronounces it, and the word was once, presumably, "canoe"; but "canoe" gives the impression of lightness, airiness, and paddles, while a "cunner" is long and heavy, and carries a good stout sail, and needs a man and a boy to handle it in a wind, and is capable of speed. "Cunners" are made of four hollowed pine trunks, and fit the landscape just as the boats with prairie-schooner tops fit Como or the lateen sails fit the harbor of Salerno.

We sailed up long stretches of sparkling estuary, past house after house built in 1720 or 1740 and associated with men who served with Braddock or signed the Declaration or won fame as general or admiral.

Sweeping up one of the tidewater inlets before a sharp wind, the spray dashed in over the bow, and our boatman adjusted what may be called a wooden fin, to heighten the bow and keep off the flying

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water. The shape of the fin and the purpose for which it was used seemed strangely familiar. Where had we seen such a thing? And then it came to us. In crossing from Monnikendam to Marken, in a high sea, the old Dutch skipper, in his ribbed knee-stockings, and trousers of wonderful cut, and his silver-buttoned jacket, stooped and slipped just such a fin into place as a wave came over the bow, remarking stolidly that out on the North Sea it must be "vindisch und sturmish." It was curious to recognize the similarity between the methods of the Zuyder Zee and the Chesapeake.

Ahead of us, in the estuary, was a rounding curve of land, a little higher than the neighboring river bank. It sloped on three sides gently and grassily to the water. There was a stretch of silvery sand where the tide rose and fell below the grass line. There were great elms in park-like plenty. From the water's edge and the ruins of a small landing a broad path went up, very straight, to an old house. It was Easter week, and that path, grassgrown now, was still bordered on either side by the green and yellow of daffodils. We could see that, as the path approached the house, it rose by two stone steps to a smooth terrace immediately in front.

We were rounding the bend, when a gust of wind

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took us very suddenly and the pole of the rudder cracked off short, and the boatman turned the craft toward the shore and grounded it under the bank. He would borrow an ax, he said, to cut and trim a new rudder pole from a cedar tree.

So we landed, to explore this enchanted land. We walked under the elms around the headland so that we might go up the daffodil path. The house to which it led was low and rambling, with wings. The main part had four dormer windows and was bowered in honeysuckle. It was empty, and in care of a negro. He came from his cabin, some distance away, opened the door, and told us the owners would be glad to have us see the house and rest in the shade.

The house was built for hospitality and not for solitude. It had individuality. It welcomed us although it was empty. We entered the great room under the dormers. It had a waxed floor and low ceiling. On the side toward the daffodil path and the water there were two windows and a door. On the opposite side were other two windows and another door, and the river-like estuary so curved that they also looked out toward the water. The rising sun would shine in at one side and the setting sun at the other. This room, which had been the library,

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was unusually long, and at either end stood a fireplace, set in a paneled and wainscoted wall.

And how charming it would be to take such a home in such a region—to fill it with old furniture treasures gathered hereabouts and from other regions as old. Why, it would be the very poetry of living! The gleaming water, everywhere the magic touch of a charming age, everywhere repose and peace and beauty, with honeysuckle and oaks, with scarlet birds, with climbing vines and nodding dormers, with fires flaming joyously at each other from opposite ends of the noble library, and with the long room, like the hall of the famous chateau of the Cher, “illuminated from either side by the flickering river-light”—what could possibly be more felicitous!

People can almost always find the house for which they earnestly seek, the house which their temperament and needs demand. Hawthorne, in New England, found the Old Manse and the little red house at Stockbridge Bowl; Stevenson, on the Pacific, found his Silverado; and others may find a Silverado or an Old Manse as they alternatively prefer.

The thirty houses of the Farmington—this house and other empty houses that we found, along this Eastern Shore—our own old inn—all show what may be done by him who would do it. And always,

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a region of such houses tells unmistakably that it is a region where charming old furniture may be acquired.

—Charming? Of course! Old furniture is always charming! Why, even when Hardcastle tried to be sarcastic, with Marlow, he could n't help expressing the beauty and the charm of the very things that the present generation has come to collect with such enthusiasm. "There 's a pair of silver candlesticks, and there 's a fire-screen, and here 's a pair of brazen-nosed bellows—perhaps you may take a fancy to them? There are a set of prints too, and there 's a mahogany table that you may see your own face in."





CHAPTER XIII

BUYING APPARENT WRECKS

IT is not only the pleasure and the fascination of successful pursuit that appeal to him who searches out old furniture. It is the feeling that the prize won is to be established in his house, and that it is to be an ever-present satisfaction there. For our own part we found, as many others have found, that the feelings and the pleasures are precisely such as these. The initial triumph, the sense of satisfaction in getting our own pieces of furniture into the once-while inn, the keener pleasure of placing them in the best position, and the lasting satisfaction of having them where their shape and their associations speak to us, are what constitute the charm. And if a number of the articles cost but a trifle, the pleasure is augmented. Just as the Metropolitan Museum, of New York, recently told with pride of the acquisition of a splendidly carved an-

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cient newel post and panels, secured in France, at a house in course of demolition, for two dollars each!

A friend, who also loves the old shapes, likes to say: "I will get my furniture in modern reproductions. What pleasure is there in buying junk?"

Well, there certainly would be but little pleasure in buying old furniture if it were to remain as junk. Apparent junk must be viewed with the eyes of common-sense and faith. If a piece is too badly broken to be satisfactorily repaired it ought not to be acquired. Of this class was a great four-poster we once saw, that had possessed splendidly carved posts and pineapple ornamentation, but which, to make it fit into a low-eaved corner, had been ruthlessly sawed off at the tops of all four posts to a ruinous shortness; and then the sawed-off pieces had been burned. That bed was not worth accepting even had it been offered as a gift. But many a broken or hard-used article of furniture can be restored to its pristine strength, and, so far as appearance goes, may almost fit the lilting old rhyme about being given a polish of so brilliant a hue as to make it look newer than when it was new.

And so, it is one answer to our friend that no pieces should be gathered except those which are susceptible to treatment (in our own case he recognizes, al-

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beit with grumblings, that there may be something in this practical view), and it is still another answer that by far the greater part of modern reproductions miss the precisely perfect proportions. This, which seems absurdly unnecessary, is just as absurdly true. It is with copyists of old furniture as it is with copyists of old buildings: the infinite personal care of the past is likely to be lacking in these modern days, and to copy accurately is an art hard to acquire even with the aid of measurements. At the same time the copyist feels an almost irresistible tendency to "improve" upon the original with little changes or adaptations here and there: little in themselves, perhaps, such changes, but vastly important in effect.

Moreover, all the fascination of the veritable touch of the past, the tender or stately charm of association, is lost in the modern copies of the old.

Not only may it be expressed, as a general rule, that nothing of the broken should be purchased which is not capable of good and adequate repair, but conversely it may be stated that nothing which is wanted and which is capable of repair should be passed by on account of its wrecked appearance. But the art of knowing what is reasonably capable of repair is a difficult one to master.

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Naturally and unavoidably, the beginner will make some mistakes. It is only by experience, and a gradually acquired knowledge of what it is possible for him to do or to have done, that he can gain the ability to decide. And what is possible for one man may not be possible for another. It is well for a collector to find one of those old-fashioned craftsmen, usually French or German, who make a specialty of doing curious and clever handiwork.

But, although broken furniture ought often to be purchased, one should not permit himself the accumulation of broken glass or china. That is something which will surely be regretted, for broken china gives an effect of dilapidation to an entire house that all else in the way of strength and solidity cannot offset. It is seldom that broken china or glass, except for very simple breaks, can be so repaired as to be satisfactory in both strength and appearance; and if it cannot be thus repaired—if it be a pitcher with a handle gone, or a sugar bowl with a great chip in its side, or a platter with a section missing—do not listen to the voice of the inward tempter, telling of what a rare design it is or of what a beautiful color.

Except for a museum, all furniture and china should be capable of handling and use. There is little pleasure, and much inevitable dissatisfaction, in

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the possession of china that must not be touched or chairs that must not be sat upon, in tables precariously patched or glass bowls perilously pieced.

With furniture, much can be done. In our own collecting, in the earlier days, we allowed a number of valuable articles to escape us because we did not then have the necessary knowledge and experience. But when one reflects that many of the most sincere dealers, who really love the goods they handle, sell old furniture just as they find it, whether broken or whole, one begins to realize that there must be high potentialities of mending.

In our own experience, no piece that we ever restored was so broken, so utterly a wreck, as a mighty fireside chair that we picked up on one of our Southern visits. It is so tall as to hide with its magisterial back the tallest man who seeks its comfort; it is portly of width (it is three feet and ten inches across the arms) and of stately, rounding curves. In age it is well over a century.

When discovered, in a shed, the chickens had been roosting upon it, which was far from adding a distinguished air, and there was no trace whatever of the seat. That had completely vanished. The leather covering was hanging, here and there on the sides and back, in strips and fragments. The chair

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had suffered the penalties of popularity. Little was left, indeed, but the outline shape and the framework, but the framework was mighty and the shape was fine. Yet even the frame, although intrinsically strong, had become racked and loosened.

But the chair was full of possibilities, and was purchased. Wrapped in burlaps, it was shipped up by water and rail. This wrapping was for two reasons. For once, enthusiastic collectors though we were, we fear we were not proud of having quite such a forlorn wreck, quite such a thing of rags and tatters, carried into our home, past the eyes of our friends. But better reason than this regard for appearances was our desire not to let the freight handlers know how bad it looked. It was sure of more careful handling, wrapped carefully, than as an apparent jumble of fragments. And we knew that until it should be repaired it could not stand much more of hard usage. The chair cost four dollars, but that included wrapping in new burlaps and the cartage.

The pads on the sides and back were fortunately still in place; they were of good curled horsehair; and as their proportions would bear mightily on the comfort of the rehabilitated chair, they were taken off carefully and kept separate, so as to resume their

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places unaltered in quantity, and each pad was thoroughly cleansed by a soaking in gasoline.

The next task was to take out all the tacks and nails. And although the time-worn query of where all the pins go to is still unanswered, we felt that we had found a complete reply to the question of where all the tacks go. For it seemed as if their number in that chair was legion. Every one was taken out, thoroughly to clean the chair, and to make sure that old nails should not interfere with the placing of the new ones, and to preclude the possibility of annoying scratchiness through the new upholstery.

Then the great frame was thoroughly blocked, for the old blocks had fallen away and permitted it to waver. Square new blocks were placed where the solid mahogany legs join the frame of the seat, and firmness was restored.

The chair stood, now, a bare wooden frame, and the next task was to scrape and polish it; an easy task, because all the wood that was to show was the four short legs and the strong cross-braces—strong enough, these, to illustrate the old rule in regard to chairs, that the heavier the underbracing the older the chair.

A new seat was next provided. Originally, the chair had no springs, but there was no reason why



Heppelwhite Low-boy and a Heppelwhite Fireside Chair
Restored from Wreck

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springs should not be used, and so a number of upholsterer's springs were set in place, with webbing and hair. The pads were then replaced on the back and the sides, and stout muslin was stretched over all.

The chair, which had thus gradually grown and developed, was no longer just a form, but a form clothed in white, and showing by this means all of its proper lines.

Next came the final upholstering. We needed it to be in yellow, and so it was covered with a yellow linen taffeta, fastened with brass nails all around the edges—a total of precisely 379 brass heads in sight! Yet they are scarcely noticeable, so long are the curving lines they follow and so merged are they in the yellow covering of this most comfortable old Heppelwhite fireside chair.

And now the chair stood once more perfect: once more it was what its builder had intended it to be, a thing of beauty and promising to be a source of comfortable joy forever. And it may be added that a point to consider, in choosing such a broad-backed chair, with arms, is to see that the line of the arm continues, with a slight projection, to the back of the chair, thus giving a comfortable elbow support throughout the whole width of either side. Num-

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bers of these old chairs were made with the line of the arm merged wholly into the sheltering sides, and they thereby lack in comfort.

No one can understand the handicraftsmanship of the old days till he has stripped a fine old chair to its skeleton. Many a little structural secret will be discovered which would never have been guessed had the chair merely been sent to an upholsterer, without examination. For example, with this great fireside chair it is really marvelous that, without weakening the structure a particle, there should be long narrow spaces, almost the length of the back and the sides, left in the framework for the purpose of allowing the covering to be drawn through and cinched. No upholsterer's needle was necessary on this chair, and every line of its shape is clean-cut and clear.

Early in your collecting, search out some man who is a deft repairer of furniture, a man who has come to some inheritance of the ways of the olden time; and then fasten to him with hooks of steel. The man who will "putter" patiently over a broken fragment, who will handle it intelligently, is a prize to the lover of old furniture. For there are many repairs which one cannot do himself; many which only the skilled craftsman can accomplish.

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Good fortune gave us the acquaintance of an old German who had a little shop in that picturesquely rambling part of New York still known as Greenwich Village, and at that queer corner where Waverley Place bifurcates. He died a year or so ago; he and his wife, who was his companion in a strangely solitary existence in the heart of the great city, were taken away by a call which came with little warning and simultaneously to both of them. But while he lived he was the perfection of a furniture repairer.

He was from Mainz; this man of patient skill and infinite pains; and, learning that we knew his native town, he spoke, now and then, with a shy pleasure, of the majestic Rhine, of the islands, of the vineyards and the wine, of the old-time streets of Mainz, and of the great old Cathedral, the Dom, with houses built so closely against it as to leave only two narrow entrance ways into its wide interior. His eyes glowed with pleasure at a reference to his beloved Mainz or to the Rhine; but it never stopped his slow and patient work, his thoughtful, near-sighted peering. He possessed in rare degree a knowledge of the furniture craftsmanship of the Old World. He could polish to perfection, too—but he was old, and his arm easily grew weary, and so, although now

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and then polishing a piece for us, he taught us the valuable art by careful precept and example, so that if we wished we could do it ourselves on any of our own furniture.

He had little patience with those who did not possess some knowledge of furniture making, and it was amusing to see him use shiny varnish or, worse yet, what he called "daub," for such customers as he did not consider of the elect. "It is just so good for them," he would say with a shrug of the shoulders. "They know not the difference, they!" He had goodly store of old mahogany boards, for use in mending, and could do wonders with them.

His apron of blue ticking, his dry-smoke cigar, his favorite phrase following his peering examination; "I make it all right! I make it flush mit dat!" his nodding self-communion as he planned how to go about some difficult job, all were suggestive of the completed success that was sure to follow. It was a pleasure to watch his delicate handling of a piece of French Boulle, wrecked by the steam heat of an American home, or his masterful relaying of the inlay of a shattered Sheraton table.

One can usually find such a man in any of the great cities. Generally, too, such a man's prices are inversely as to his skill. This old German carved for

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us, in mahogany, a piece of ornamentation several inches long, to replace a lost fragment and match a piece on the opposite side of a table; the copy was exact, the carving was fine, and the charge was only half a dollar!

An especially difficult little job was the straightening of the warp in one half of the top of a swing-and-turn fine mahogany card-table; one of those tops that turn on a pivot and fold up into half space. The table had drifted into a kitchen before we acquired it, and had been used for ironing and pressing clothes, and one of the halves was exceedingly warped.

The man of Mainz tried, first, the usual panacea of removing the offending board, scraping off the varnish, wetting the board upon the reverse side, and then letting it stand in the sun. But this simple-seeming remedy for once would not answer, efficacious though it generally is. Then he studied it long and carefully. "I cut it into strips!" he cried exultantly. Whereupon he cut it into six pieces and, reversing them alternately as he laid them down, and using the plane a little, he triumphed completely. There was about a quarter of an inch lost in sawdust, and for this width he put in a strip of mahogany from one of his many boards; and the

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job was done. And so beautifully glued and polished were the pieces that it is almost impossible to discover the joinings, even by close examination.

But there was one time when even the old German could not help us, once when we learned that everything is not so easy as it seems. We had found two oval Sheraton tea-boards (one thinks of Franklin's letter home to his wife, telling her of the English way of using tea-board and tea-cups). The tea-boards were of rare design, delicately inlaid in the centre and brass-handled on the ends. But the encircling upright edges of thin wood, an inch in height, had left their sockets and sprung out of place, and unless this could be remedied the tea-boards would be hopeless wrecks.

But they seemed to be particularly easy to repair; it was almost the kind of thing we could have done ourselves, so we rashly thought, even though we had then had but little experience in repairing. But, alas! it was not an easy thing at all. The old German solemnly shook his head. It irked him to say that there was something he could not do. But the boards must, he said, go to some one who had a steaming room and could steam the rims into shape. No glue could possibly make the strips, as they were, stick in their precarious grooves. "If they were but



A New York chair made
before 1750

A Pennsylvania chair
of 1790



With splat; therefore
made in Great Britain

Simple design for
a porch



What is termed an "Ex-
tension Back"

Locally called a "Fiddle-
string,"

Windsor Chairs

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square-cornered!" and he shrugged his shoulders in despair.

Finally the man with a steaming outfit was found, a French cabinet-maker and repairer so far over on the East Side as to be beyond the numbered avenues and on a lettered one. He was an expert worker and at the same time an enthusiast. He did the needful steaming, and he found it necessary, too, to make a mold the exact size of the rail-edges, for the forming of a new section of rail. All of which was an object-lesson as to the difficulty of doing some repairs.

Of course, in this case the game was worth the candle; and being human, it soothed us for our worry and trouble that, after paying the skillful Frenchman's most reasonable charge, he courteously asked permission to copy the boards, so highly did he admire them.

A comparatively simple case of repair, though at first it had much the appearance of being hopeless, was in regard to a fine mahogany table with claw-and-ball feet, dating back into the eighteenth century. Such a wreck it was, that the man who unearthed it charged only a dollar for it and then believed that he was taking an unfair advantage! "Don't buy it," he said; "you can't possibly get it repaired, and I don't like to sell such a thing."

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And he would have been right had it been our intention to have it restored as it originally was. That would have been impossible, or at least so difficult as to cost an unreasonable sum. It was a table, two legs of which turned most unexpectedly on wooden hinges, to support queer wings. It was a highly elaborate affair, and must have been the pride of some one's heart in an old Colonial home.

It was a pity to reduce its dimensions; but it was best to restore as much as possible, and without reduction nothing at all could be done. Heroic treatment was imperatively called for.

The top was so mangled as to be worthless. But a wing, hanging precariously by a broken hinge, was made into the top by the man of Mainz. Then, retaining the fine original four legs and all of the frame, and having it all polished, the table became a beauty, and its surface was still considerable, being three feet nine by one foot eleven. Upon the sides it was unavoidable, in the rejuvenation, that the original wooden hinge should show; but such a blemish may readily be overcome by spreading over the side a covering of veneer.

The restoration of a fine Heppelwhite piece, which had been the lower half of a high-boy or perhaps of a cabinet desk, is another illustration of the miracles

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that can be done. The upper part having vanished into limbo, there was only an open space where the top ought to stand, and the veneer and inlay had all sprung from the drawer fronts and from the face of the framework and were hanging loose in dejected sheets. The satisfactoriness of design, and the beauty of the wood itself and of the inlay that was still upon the tapering legs, made it seem worth while to take some trouble.

And it was not so desperate a matter, after all. The veneer was entirely removed and all the glue cleaned off. Then the veneer was carefully relaid—and with that simple task the thing was done, except for the top; and for that, a new top was cut from a fine piece of mahogany. The very simplicity of many such a task in the hands of an intelligent and skillful cabinet worker is often a surprise even to those who have had experience in restorations.

We had a chair, of Chippendale design, so filled with worm-holes that it seemed an impossibility to restore it; and the bottom ends of three of the legs were so worm-eaten as to be positively feathery. There were special reasons why we wished to preserve this chair. Nor was the task a specially difficult one, in spite of appearances. First, corrosive

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sublimate was painted over all the holes. This was colorless, and effectually disposed of any life that might exist in the depths. Next a cement of bees-wax and resin was applied, to fill the holes, and it was mixed with enough of dry vermilion to give the needful color.

A simple way to apply such a cement is to run it in with a chisel heated in a candle flame, using a worn-out chisel, as its temper may be ruined by the heat. Lay the cement on the hole and draw the heated chisel over it. Then, with a sharp knife, scrape off all that is superfluous.

The chair was now ready for the German cabinet-maker. He cut the feathery bottoms from the three offending legs, taking from an inch and a half to three inches from each, and then, with the care that goes only with workers of his class, he modeled three new pieces to match. And it is not an easy thing to do, with an old-time, hand-made chair whose legs run down in different and heedful proportions.

With small things, wonders can often be worked. There was a Sheffield-plate candlestick, ten and a quarter inches high, of absolutely perfect shape, but broken into two pieces and lop-sidedly fastened with a rat-tail file pushed up through the middle where the cement filling had fallen out. It was a wob-

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bling, broken wreck; it was excessively dirty; and it seems preposterously impossible to say that all the owner wanted for it was ten cents; one cent an inch and the final quarter inch thrown in!

The ten cents was at once forthcoming, and the seller was pleased. It was so far from being a case of belittling on the part of the purchaser; of "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth"; that it was the seller who belittled it and who was ready to boast of having got anything at all for so worthless a thing.

We took it to a silversmith, for it was a case for delicate work. It was beautifully mended and polished, and would now command a considerable price at any antique shop.

More doubtful was an impulse which led us to secure, one day, a silver-plated soup tureen, corpulent in shape and long in the legs. For a soup tureen it had a lofty, not to say spindly, aspect, and although it might once have had pretensions as a silver-plated article, almost the last of the plating had disappeared. There was, however, much of the graceful about the article if it could but find its proper niche in the world.

One day, at Tiffany's, he of the favrile glass, we saw a workman securing a beautiful green color by

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brushing acid over bronze—that shade of green which gives a metal the aspect of the pieces dug up at Herculaneum. Here was the hint—and acid was experimented with upon the tureen. But it was not of the same metal as that upon which the workman had been operating, and acid only turned it black. But it was an idea not to be relinquished, and there was further experiment, and finally a green paint, diluted to attenuated thinness, was stroked over the silver-denuded tureen, making it the color of beautiful green bronze. The village blacksmith was next seen and he cut a hole through the cover of the tureen. Then, through the lid, a fat lamp-bowl was set, the hole where the soup-ladle handle used to go through giving a space in which to get at the filling hole of the lamp. A green shade of proper hue was easy to find, and we had a unique and most pleasing lamp!

So strangely are some things acquired and with such sequence of good fortune, that one is over and over again tempted to believe that nothing is impossible. Now, here are two actual happenings. And they are told as encouragement to those who seek in hopes of finding.

A mirror came to us as a gift; a good mirror, in a narrow mahogany frame, the measurements being

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eighteen inches by fourteen. It had been a dressing-table mirror and had once swung between two slender uprights above some little drawers, to which they were attached. It was a good mirror even by itself, but we naturally regretted the absence of the drawers and the uprights, which had been lost or destroyed.

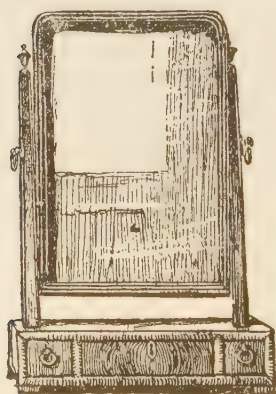
Then, at an auction sale, not long afterward, what should be put up but a set of little drawers, for the top of a dressing-table, surmounted by slender pillars between which a mirror was intended to swing. The wood was of mahogany, with profusion of fine inlay. But there was no mirror! And on that account there was no competition in bidding.

When we say, literally, that without changing the mirror frame or the uprights, that mirror which had come to us from one source precisely fitted the frame and uprights picked up at an auction, surely nothing could be much more curious.

Once upon a time we became the possessors of a brass fire-shovel with an exceptionally fine handle, but with the shovel portion so worn out as to be both useless and unattractive. A year afterward, for twenty-five cents, we secured a brass shovel of fine openwork pattern, which had no handle! And it precisely matched our handle! A worker in metals put the two acquisitions together, and the result is an

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unusually long-handled fire-shovel, of fine design and workmanship, all of a brass which takes a splendid polish, and with the parts so well matched that no one could ever guess, what is really the case, that the two pieces came together from places six hundred miles apart.





CHAPTER XIV

REPAIRING AND POLISHING AT HOME

IT is not as if the dictum of Miles Standish about doing a thing one's self could always be applied to putting into good condition old furniture that has suffered from age and use. Often, and perhaps generally, if one wants an article of furniture well repaired, the best way is to send it to an expert craftsman. But, on the other hand, there are a great many things which one can do one's self, and which it is convenient and advantageous, as well as economical, to do. The cultivation of a certain handiness and adaptability in regard to old furniture tends to increase the enjoyment of the collector.

"Now, what are you going to do with that?" asked a friend, as he looked at a shabby wooden chair, perhaps no older than 1815, whose top rail was missing from the back, leaving curving, horn-

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like projections above the middle slat and the slender spokes. He smiled as he asked the question, and there was the suggestion of gentle scoff in his voice.

In truth, there was not a promising outlook for filling the gap where that top slat ought to be (slats, it should be said, are strips running horizontally across a chair back, and a splat is the piece running vertically from top to bottom in the middle), for we knew from the mate of the chair that a new slat would be hard to make. For one reason, it would have to be bent on a difficult and unusual curve, and unless made precisely right it would look decidedly unattractive.

We looked at it thoughtfully. "You mean, that it is a subject for the scrap-heap?"

"Well, you've got to get a scrap-heap some day," he responded airily, "and you may as well begin with this old chair—like those early Ohio settlers, you know, that took a nonogenarian along to begin the cemetery with."

In the face of this friendly taunt we were bound to make use of that chair. And, when the idea came, it was, like many another illuminative idea, extremely simple. The curving projections were sawed off, close above the middle slat. The knobs were planed and smoothed into a receding curve.

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Then, as the chair had always been a painted one, it was sandpapered, and painted a cream white, and placed in front of a dressing-table; and guests have used it there and expressed their wonder that there should be such a fetching, short-backed chair.

Before one can really come to the love of furniture he must patiently and personally handle it till he has patiently and personally learned it.

You are, say, more or less hazy in regard to the actual construction and merits of a Chippendale chair. Well, after first catching the chair, choosing a shabby one that needs general restoration and polishing, take a stout, broad-bladed knife and begin to scrape. Hold the edge of the knife to the wood at right angles and draw steadily toward you. The chair, in its checkered career, has probably had several coats of varnish and probably a coat of paint. Work hard, and see that every particle of this coating falls to the floor. No injury will come to the wood if you use care. Good mahogany seems glad to be scraped, and is not easily scratched or raised in shavings, when the knife is heavy and straight and the strokes even and if there are no digging motions. Instead of a knife, glass is used by some, but it is treacherous and easily scratches.

As the chair is cleared to the wood, and you thus

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become on intimate terms with it, you will increasingly realize that the patient, personal touch is causing you to take in to the full every point of outline and beauty. As each corner is finished you will notice not only the curves but the mode of construction; as you work on, over the curves of the perforated splat and the shape of the stalwart legs, you will begin to understand a Chippendale chair, you will see why this cabinet-maker of St. Martin's Lane could give his name to a school of design, as the monarchs of France, on their side of the Channel, gave theirs. As the American dealers of to-day patter of Chippendale and Heppelwhite and Sheraton, and perhaps even of that Shearer whose fame was almost lost in the glory of his rivals, so, in the shops of Paris, the dealers' talk is punctuated with the famous Quatorze and Quinze and Seize.

By the time you have your chair scraped and clean you have not only learned the merits of construction, but you have discovered the faults and weaknesses that time has brought to your specimen.

Even the beginner can do many things toward restoration, and it is a particularly keen pleasure to see a battered treasure return to beauty under one's own hands. A table-top comes to mind as one of the things that yielded some of these thrills. It had seven marks, round and sunken, where the wood was



Empire Book Case, Unrestored, of about 1810, with Rosette Brasses
and Claw Feet, and Glass in Latticed Design

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crushed by sharp blows, apparently from a hammer. An old cabinet-maker had told us how to raise such dents, and we followed his directions although with misgivings as to success. Water was dropped in each depression; blotting-paper was laid over it, and a warm flatiron, not so warm as to scorch the wood, was placed over each blotting-paper. The old cabinet-maker had smiled queerly when he said that it would need many applications. For a whole day, each time those irons were found cool more water was applied, with a blotter and another mildly warm iron. Slowly, magic was done; slowly the wood swelled and rose! Fortunately, no wood was missing. The blows had merely sunk into the table without breaking it. Moisture and heat gradually swelled the sunken fibre and it resumed its old smooth surface, while at the same time there was no effect whatever upon the wood surrounding the dents, which therefore remained level and smooth.

Hammer dents, it is well to remark, ought always to be looked upon with suspicion, and the piece of furniture upon which they are found should be examined, as to authenticity, with unusual care, for the making of such dents is a trick often resorted to by the unscrupulous to give a false appearance of age to a counterfeit.

The most effective way to treat fine woods, after

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they have been scraped clean and repaired, is by means of what is known as French polishing. And French polishing may be done at one's own home, with keen pleasure in the result of one's efforts, and, it may be added, with a very considerable financial saving, for it is an expensive kind of work to have done by a professional polisher. It is a fascinating art to understand, and here is how it is done.

Let us presume that the article to be polished is of mahogany—and yet, except for very slight modifications called for by questions of coloring and filling, the rules will fit almost any wood.

First, the piece of mahogany, after it is scraped to the wood, is rubbed with powdered pumice-stone and boiled linseed oil—rubbed hard and long with a rough woolen rag, such as a piece of ingrain carpet or horse-blanket. Seeing a workman in the Rue St. Antoine at this very work, and examining his rubber, we found that he had a stone within it to give a hardness to the pressure of the cloth and oil and pumice-stone upon the wood. Since then, with us, a stone is used and it is certainly an aid to efficacy. The beauty of the finished work depends upon the smoothness given the wood by this rubbing.

But veneered wood must not be thus rubbed, for it would soften the glue, nor does veneer need it, for

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the wood chosen for veneer is usually very smooth and close-grained. Wood which has been well cared for and is unmarred under the old polish does not need this preliminary work to be long continued, for the effect of the pumice-stone and oil of years ago has not been lost.

Should a soft place appear where some inferior piece of wood has been used, apply a coat of glue and water and leave until dry. This will harden the grain of the wood.

Crevice should be filled with a cement of beeswax and resin and vermilion, heated together, and run into the hole with a warm chisel. Should a depression be found in an otherwise smooth surface, as is frequently the case at the centre of a knotty and gorgeous part of the mahogany, do not try the water and blotter method, for, the wood not having been crushed, it will not rise. But, with a brush, dip into the bottle of polish, described below, and generously cover this spot. As often as this hardens drop more until the depression is built up to the proper level. When perfectly hard it can be rubbed smooth with the rest of the surface.

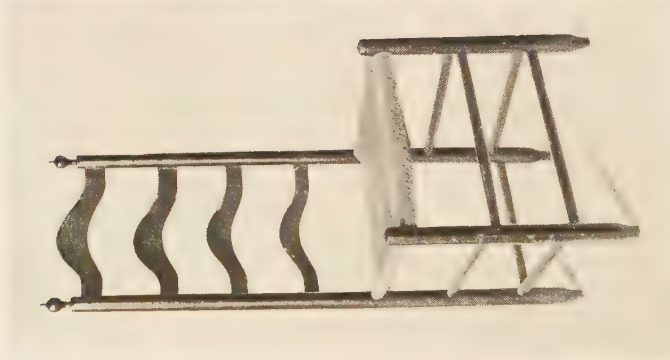
We have always found sandpaper, even of the finest quality, a scratchy and poor substitute for pumice and oil and energy.

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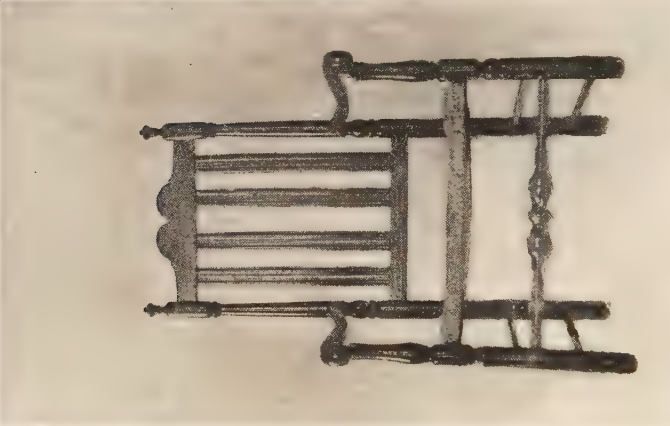
After the surface feels smooth and satiny, wipe the wood dry and clean, and place it in a well-lighted room where there will be no dust. It is well to do the work in a room where tools and bottles shall remain undisturbed.

Now, for the actual polishing, have a wide-mouthed quart bottle for the necessary mixture. There is some divergence among workers as to this, but here is a mixture that we have found admirable: One pint of grain alcohol; four ounces of dry shellac of a light color, crushed small; and half an ounce each of gum arabic and gum sandarac, powdered fine. This bottle must stand on a sunny window-sill, or on a warm register, or in a hot sand bath, but never near fire, for three days; and with sundry shakings it will turn into a thick and rather clear liquid with no sediment or undissolved matter. The sandarac sometimes settles, but still has a slight waterproofing influence in the mixture.

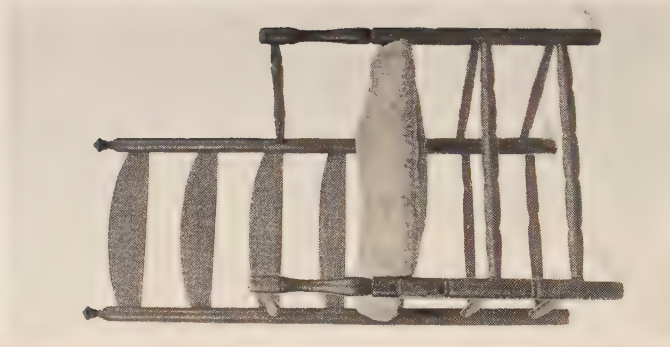
Now to begin. In your hand have an inch-thick, four-inch square, of folded flannel, soft and fine. It must be covered with a piece of old linen which is not linty. Open the square and pour in from the bottle a tablespoonful or less. Gather the corners and edges into the hand so that a round, plump cushion, with the polish in the heart of it, protrudes, cov-



“This chair was made nearly a hundred years ago in a little Pennsylvania town



Old banister-back, 150 years old: painted black, as was customary with chairs of this shape



Slat-back armchair of about 1780; a simple and not uncommon design

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ered with the fine linen. Touch this linen with one slight dab of linseed oil and take a cautious light stroke down the grain of the wood toward the light from the window. Very slowly, and without ever resting this dauber on the wood, a back-and-forth movement must be made. The polish begins to appear. The wood glows. The fire of its color gleams. Happiness steals over you. You return to the bottle for more. As skill grows you can sail gayly back and forth and by many parallel long strokes you will cover the small surface you are first attempting. For you will be wise, and not begin with the top of the dining-table, but take a leg or, better still, a candle-stand or a dressing-glass frame.

After you feel master of the back-and-forth stroke, try a circular movement, which seems to surface things over and make progress. Return to the bottle for more liquid as needed, and renew the linen should it wear through, for the wool fibre will stick to the wood and destroy your surface. A very occasional dab of oil will be necessary on the linen.

One beauty of French polishing is that it is dry at once. There is no waiting to see if it is going to harden or set.

Keep on until the quality of the polish is deep and resplendent, until it suits taste and fancy, and until

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you are sure you have never seen a finer finish anywhere, in friend's or rival's home or in dealer's shop. Your arms will be weary and your hands very sticky by this time; but rinse them in alcohol and save the rinsing in a bottle, for you may use it later.

Next morning it is a little appalling to see how much the fine polish has gone in over night. But this is not very discouraging, for it has really gone in and has not evaporated. Instead of going on at once with more polish, take the old pumice-stone and oil rubber and rub the surface down to dullness; with a less vigorous stroke, however, than on the bare wood. Wipe clean, and again take the linen-covered, soft, woolen rubber (which will keep for many days without hardening if dropped in a covered can when not in use), and begin to put more polish on. Were you pleased yesterday? You will be more than that to-day. How the polish improves is a constant delight. The beauty, and the possibilities of beauty, in mahogany grow upon you, and you see in fancy the shabby old desk and the Empire work-table undergoing this very metamorphosis within the week. Put on all the polish that the wood requires; be sure to put on enough; and leave it again over night.

In the morning comes the last and most delicate

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of the operations. The work can be left as it is so far as durability is concerned, but another hue to the rainbow can be added by what is called spiriting off.

Take a roll or piece of soft linen, such as a fine but worn-out handkerchief. Tear off hems and monograms or fold them in, to insure softness. Take the alcohol you used for rinsing your fingers, or put a few drops from the polish bottle into fresh alcohol. Moisten your soft roll of linen in this and skim over the surface of your work with it. The end to be accomplished is to run the polish together into a hard and resisting surface. This moist rag will do wonderful things if a little skill is acquired in its use, but one lingering smear of it will lift the polish from the wood and leave the work of days a ruin, only to be scraped away.

French polishing leaves a brilliant deep polish on the wood, which a blow will not turn into a yellow mark, with fractures, as is the case with varnished wood, and it is as good and strong as ingenuity has invented. Should a duller surface be desired; and it is more effective on sombre old chests of drawers and many heavy old pieces; rub the finished surface very gently, and very little, with flannel and pumicestone and oil. It is the work of a few moments to change from brightness to dullness, yet we have

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known bills to be sent with six dollars' extra charge for this desired dull finish.

There are many "superstitions" to be followed, as coffee drinkers call such ceremonies as putting sugar in the cup first and coffee on top.

Never use the polish bottle on a dull or humid day. It will be contrary and sticky. Scrape and rub with oil and pumice on the dull days. You must have bright skies for good polishing.

There are many more points which emergencies will teach. If a bubbly ugly smear appears, showing where the polish has stuck to the rubber instead of to the wood, stop all work on that part for the day. Next day, when it is hard, rub with pumice-stone and oil and see if you can go on with the polish. If it is not a bad case this can be done. If it has been a case of leaving the rubber on the wood while you went downstairs, you had better betake yourself to the knife and scrape clean for a new beginning.

When flutings, or receding angles, or carvings which cannot be reached by the rounding surface of the polisher are met with, a slim and slender brush of fine hair should be dipped in the bottle and the liquid lined into these difficult places; then the pad may be resumed for the polishing of the surfaces around these same parts.

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Now and then a stain is absolutely necessary, where a patch is to be made like the original. Never use a colored varnish or a commercial stain, but dye the bare wood with a dye made of bismuth brown and alcohol, to which a granule of aniline red is added.

A patch around a keyhole, or an inset of new and light-colored mahogany, may be darkened by wiping over with lye water and rinsing off.

The continued application of lye or caustic soda in any form causes mahogany to darken into purplish hues. Many restorations come home from workshops of high repute with this queer dull purple gleaming from the wood as the result of an easy way of removing the old varnish with lye. Time and again have the uninspired restorers of old furniture pooh-poohed the folly of scraping wood and advocated the lye-can. With lye, the old varnish or polish comes off in one-eighth of the time needed by scraping, but the fire of the wood disappears too, and there comes in its stead the ugly purple which has little resemblance to the rich color of good wood well treated.

Inkstains so frequently sink into the very fibre of the wood that it is well worth knowing that, if covered with a drop of water into which one or two crys-

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tals of oxalic acid are then pushed, the ink will disappear. But watch the operation, and wipe away the acid as soon as the cleansing is complete. Remember, too, that oxalic acid is poison.

For the many things, little and big, that may be done at home, it is well to set aside a small room as a home workshop. We set apart such a room, away from the main part of the house, and gilding, upholstering, cabinet-making, polishing and general repairing are carried on with a very simple array of tools in which hatchet and tack-hammer and kitchen knife play star parts.

However, we have one useful machine. It is made from an old sewing-machine, so antiquated as to have no friend or owner. It is now a brass polisher! Polishing andirons and candlesticks and pewter mugs and pewter platters is always looked upon as a task out of usual household lines. Silver is polished without a murmur, but brass and pewter are looked upon with no eye of favor in the kitchen. And so, we had to present the polishing of brass and pewter as an easy task; hence the sewing-machine, made over with a felt burnishing wheel by a village artisan. No longer, now, is burnishing a task, and the machine was not difficult of construction. The arm was knocked off, and the felt-covered wooden

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wheel was attached. In buffing, putz or brass polish is used.

It is always pleasant to know a simple method by which some serious-seeming difficulty may be overcome. An old banister-back chair, which antedates the days of Chippendale, with generous rush seat, and a front rung with a huge knob in the middle, was preliminarily cleaned of its green paint; then, its dull black was restored by first applying logwood boiled in water, and, when this was dry, by brushing over with vinegar in which rusty nails had been left for several hours. The chair had a dirty mussy brown color when the work was done, but in a few minutes the color became ebony-like, and was a great success. The advantage of this, over painting it black, is that the very fibre of the wood is dyed, and the chair does not, therefore, wear white on the arms and edges.

It is always well to have on hand a sheet of mahogany veneer, which can be purchased at some wood warehouse where you have spied the sign of "Veneer" from passing trolley or from high-level bridge. Scissors will clip a piece of harmonizing streak and grain for some spot where it is needed; and with a clean surface, freshly-made glue and a heavy weight, or, still better, a wooden clamp, you can easily do the work of mending veneer. Or you may relay

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loose veneer by cleaning it, using fresh glue, and replacing it under pressure. The glue should be of fine quality; preferably, of German make.

A blister in old veneer may be laid by slitting it in the middle and pouring in some glue, working it thoroughly under every part of the blister, pressing out all that you can, and then laying a very heavy weight on it.

Time enters into all these things, and the beginner is apt to become impatient while waiting for glue to harden and veneer to adhere.

Once learn the art of putting in rush seats in chairs—it may easily be learned from some worker of the old school—and you are not only ready to repair a rush seat that has become broken and ragged by use, but you need never hesitate about acquiring some fine old chair, with broken bottom, when opportunity offers, although you would probably let the prize pass if you had not learned this art.

There are many things which the collector himself may do. You may put on missing handles of brass or glass—first waiting until, in some junk-shop or odd corner, you find the handle of precisely the proper period. You may do a myriad of things with broken furniture, thereby acquiring personal knowledge of the admirable old-time ways, and, especially

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if you live at some distance from a city, saving yourself endless trouble in shipping articles of furniture back and forth. Beginning by doing the work from motives of economy or convenience, you will soon acquire a real love for it.





CHAPTER XV

IN THE DINING-ROOM

IN the ancient Pennsylvania Bethlehem, beside the Lehigh, a town intimately connected with the romance and tragedy of early settlement, there still stand houses built by Moravians of the olden time. And on Easter morning, long before dawn and preceding the sunrise service, a score of trombone players wake the sleeping people, playing first up in the white-pillared dome of the old Moravian church, and then at point after point throughout the town—in front of the building in which Lafayette lay wounded and where Washington visited him, and beside the ancient structure where Pulaski was presented with a banner by the Moravian maidens, and at many another spot.

A town, this, in which a lover of old furniture would especially like to obtain some examples of the old; but our stay there was but during Easter Day.

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But mark, again, how Providence watches over collectors! In an aggressively modern New Jersey town, a year or so afterward, a friend said:

"I wonder if you want to buy a piece of old furniture—a corner-cupboard. A family have moved back to their old home, leaving their furniture to be sold. Most of it was modern and sold readily. All that 's left is their corner-cupboard, and it 's too old for anybody's taste here. They want to sell it for five dollars. They brought it when they came here from their old home, Bethlehem."

And that is how it comes that this memento of the ancient Pennsylvania town stands in a corner of our dining-room—and for only five dollars and freight!

An adequate, capacious, good-looking old cupboard it is, made to lift apart in two pieces, as was customary in making tall articles of furniture. The upper half is fronted with a swinging glass door, and the lower half with swinging doors of wood. By a strange perverseness, the cupboard had been given a coat of red varnish stain, but this was easily taken off by scraping.

In this corner-cupboard, and in a cabinet on an adjoining wall, there are china and glass and silver, a little Lowestoft, a little Wedgwood, a little old Sèvres, a huge old English soup tureen, a huge blue

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platter, with bowls and pitchers and cups and plates.

It seems a contradiction; but most old American china was of English make. It was a comparatively advanced period before there was much made on this side of the ocean, and even the greater portion of those old dishes which show pictures of American scenery were made in Staffordshire.

The study of china is one all by itself, requiring long and patient research and application; and after one has examined the work of the great potteries of the world and supplemented this by a study of the examples in museums, there comes a wide humbleness of judgment, so difficult, often, is differentiation of the various makes because the different periods and factories so frequently overlap and resemble one another in style and appearance. As a rule, it is those who have acquired but a surface knowledge who are able to be most offhandedly positive as to age and make.

But there is much that may positively be learned. There are marks and signs and surfaces to consider. There are times when one may feel certainty. As, when a friend shows some china, insisting and believing (such is often the effect of mistaken family tradition) that it is "over two hundred and fifty



“ A little Lowestoft, a little Wedgwood, a little silver-lustre, a little old Sevres ”

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years old," it may perhaps be of a kind that you know was not made until the early part of the nineteenth century.

The prices of china vary, not alone from age, or from beauty of design or color, but also from rarity. As to this, there is a great arbitrariness of assumed value. At a sale, a blue plate of fair appearance, with an old Albany picture upon it, was about to be knocked down to us for fifty cents, when two men, who at that moment happened to notice it, eagerly joined the bidding, and one of them finally obtained it for twenty-eight dollars. This was solely because it was one of an historical series, now hard to find.

Pennsylvania had quite a share in the outfitting of our old dining-room; although it might more naturally have been New York from the number of distinguished men of that State who, like Washington Irving, have in past generations dined within it!

It was from Pennsylvania that even the dining-table came; a table of fine Sheraton design, with delicately fluted legs. It is of mahogany, and is made in two pieces, each semi-circular in shape, with the leaves dropping against each other in the middle. When the leaves are down the table is a circle; but it may, if desired, be used as two separate side-tables, each standing against the wall with curved front.

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It was obtained direct from a family, themselves lovers of the antique, who had long possessed it, and is one of our treasures in appearance. It cost us twenty-four dollars; not a special "bargain," and yet much less than we should have had to pay for a well-made modern table of similar size.

The buyer of the antique is liable to lose sight of the essential dearness or cheapness of a thing. He is liable to compare prices, not with ordinary prices of to-day, but with what he paid for special "finds." The collector who thinks a beautiful old mahogany table, in good condition, dear at twenty dollars, forgets that for a modern table, of some inferior wood, he would expect to pay at least over forty. The collector who thinks a superb old chair dear at five dollars, forgets that in a modern shop, for what he would consider a common chair, he would be asked at the very least eight or twelve. Often, as we have found in our own experience, charming old pieces are offered at delightfully low prices—but one must not expect to furnish his entire house at such prices!

From to-day's paper let us quote, from advertisements of modern furniture, probably all machine-made, a few prices that are expected to seem highly attractive to purchasers. Hall clocks, in the style we call "grandfather's," with mahogany cases, are

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two hundred and sixty-three to three hundred and ninety-six dollars, and with cherry and oak cases ninety-eight dollars and upward. A mahogany arm-chair, a "veritable gem set with a superb silk damask seat in choice colorings," is nineteen dollars. An "aristocratic, quarter-sawed oak dresser" is offered for forty-eight dollars. A chiffonier (what a word to use, when we have the good old "chest of drawers," or, if French be preferred, "bureau"—for "chiffonier" means a rag-picker or a receptacle for rags, or, when applied to furniture, should be used, as with the French themselves, in the cognate sense of describing a work-box for small pieces)—well, a chiffonier is offered for thirty-seven dollars. When you pick up a fine old-time chest of drawers for ten dollars and pay the repairer and polisher another ten, you have a piece incomparably beyond this..

And yet, as we read the advertisements farther, we see that this new century has something distinctively and strikingly its own to offer! For sixty-two dollars and a half you may have, combined in one single piece of furniture, "a smart mirror, a handsome tall clock, hooks for your hat, and a restful seat!"

With this, we may well return to the dining-room.

An important part of its lighting is a reminder,

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again, of Pennsylvania, for around the walls are placed half a dozen brass candelabra which we found thrown away under the stairs of a little old Quaker meeting-house, in that State. Each of the candelabra holds a single candle. Only the curving pieces of brass, with the candle holders, could be found, but we were able to supply, in mounting them, small Empire torches, of metal, with formal ribbons, in the same metal, at either side. The candles are placed at the same height as those upon the mantel, and with these, and a few candles upon the side table, the room is amply and softly lighted.

The prevailing color is yellow, but there is also much of blue in the room. The wall paper is yellow, and the large rug in the centre of the room is blue, with a braided hearth rug of blue and white in front of the fireplace. Between this room and the next hang woven curtains which may be drawn together, to separate the rooms, when it is not desired to draw the sliding doors. There are two sets of these curtains, those in the dining-room being blue. These blue curtains are a pair of coverlets, of old-time design, of white linen and indigo blue wool, hand woven in beautiful and intricate pattern, purchased from a Connecticut housewife who wanted but three dollars

IN THE DINING-ROOM

for them. And only those who know such coverlets know what tedious and lengthy work they represent. In their present position they look not in the least like coverlets, but as if they had always been hangings.

No provision having been made, by the builder of this house, for curtain rods at these doors, the want was filled with lengths of gas pipe. They make admirable rods, in appearance and serviceableness, and are painted white and sunk in the door frames.

In a window-recess is a little kettle-stand whose acquisition was of droll unexpectedness. It is square-topped, and has a raised rim and snake feet, and its appearance shows it to be of about 1775. It belonged to a neighbor who traced its possession back ancestrally into the eighteenth century. He was a man who could never think of such a thing as selling a household belonging; but he coveted a certain unpedigreed white hen, and for the possession of that fowl, termed by him a "Brammy," he gladly bartered this table.

On the mantel there is a yellow brass jar, besides the brass candlesticks, and behind them, in a dignified line, stand on edge a row of large old plates, a set of half a dozen, in a deep blue.

Within the fireplace is a pair of old brass and-

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irons. These we found, several years ago, in the granary of a tumble-down, gambrel-roofed old house, on a road in New York near the Connecticut line. When the first fire was blazing on them, out came angry wasps who had built mud cells in the concealed hollows of the pillars, giving quite a Whittier-like effect of being "hissing hot" between "the andirons' straggling feet."

Beside the fireplace is a pair of bellows, brass studded, picked up on a Naples street for half a *lira*, ten cents.

There is a trivet, too. There was a time when we were not quite sure of the meaning of the word, and when asked, "Do you have trivets in your part of the country?" we could almost have answered, as did the woman of the Tennessee Mountains when asked by the missionary if there were many Presbyterians thereabouts, that we did not know them by that name, but that the inquirer might look over the skins nailed on the barn door.

But we soon learned what a trivet is, and we have one, a simple three-legged fireside crane; and when we read in Lamb, as we chanced to shortly after acquiring it, of the man who assisted at the cooking by removing the trivet from the fire, we knew just what was meant. There is some latitude in



The Dining-room; with perfect example of round Sheraton dining-table, and the Bethehem corner-cupboard

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shape, but the general purpose is always the same—and a very helpful purpose it is.

Upon the trivet hangs the old brass kettle, flattish and rounding and ebony-handled, that was among the very earliest of our acquisitions.

In telling of what is in these rooms it is only that the experiences may arouse suggestions; it is not in the least as if the methods were offered as models. If we were writing anything didactic, it would only be some such advice as not to overcrowd your home with articles as if it were a museum; not to lose effectiveness of appearance and comfort by overfilling your rooms and cabinets and mantelpieces. It is your own home, and the principal object is to make the home attractive and comfortable.

A tea-table, quaintly square topped and square fronted, is in one wall space beside the fire, and upon it stands, against the wall, one of the oval wooden tea-boards. We like the fine old name, tea-board, rather than its substitute, tea-tray, which somehow suggests something not at all like it; if it is only a tray call it a tray, but we ought not to take away from the dignity of the really charming old articles. The great Wedgwood loved them. In his show-rooms, he displayed his exquisite tea-sets upon mahogany tea-boards.

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Against one of the walls stands a side-table, of San Domingo mahogany, of really noble fire and color. And, with the chairs, the room seems to have enough in it, save only for the lack of the missing sideboard.

The question of what pictures to hang in a dining-room is an important one. It is a room in which people spend a considerable portion of their time and in which none but pleasurable and comfortable thoughts should be evoked. For our own part, we have no love for pictured quail hanging by their toes, neither do varnished tarpon or fuzzy caribou seem agreeable dinner companions. Conversation and thoughts, at dinner, are supposed to range through a wide and agreeable field, and there is no reason why pictures should not be equally agreeable.

And so, we hung a few etchings of subjects which strike no jarring note, and in one corner is a large pastel, which, as if the artist knew that we needed a picture distinctly blue, has that color in domination.

The chairs for a dining-room ought, of course, to be of one set, and often do we think with envy of the Sheratons found by our friend in Delaware. Still, our own chairs are very satisfactory—six chairs and two armchairs, in dark leather—and they have an unusual history.

IN THE DINING-ROOM

They were purchased, far back in the fifties, by those from whom we inherited them. At the time of their purchase the prevailing styles were grievous mid-Victorian.

But the buyers did not want mid-Victorian, and they described what it was they sought.

"But they don't make that kind nowadays!" protested the dealer, the proprietor of one of the largest furniture shops of the Middle West.

"Then we 'll wait till they do," was the reply.

It was quite a time afterward, so the story was long ago told us, that the dealer one day sent word to them that he had a set which they would surely like.

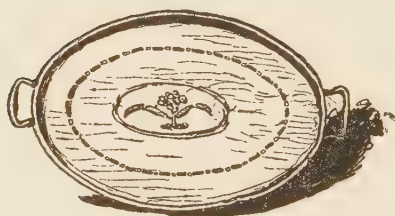
They went, and he showed them these. They were of good wood, of the form known as "steeple-back," high and narrow, with an oval, upholstered panel and a rather pointed top, and of comfortable and dignified mien, as befits the chairs of a dining-room.

"Yes; those will do very well;" and they were at once purchased. They looked new; there was no thought of their being anything else; there was nothing said as to being old or new, but the shop was one that handled new goods only.

Not till forty years afterward did the secret come out, and then it came through a reupholstering. And

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the secret was, that these fine strong chairs had all been old at the time of their sale in the fifties! Here and there were telltale shreds and portents, unquestionably pointing out the fact that they were, as their shape had all along implied, of early in the century!





CHAPTER XVI

IN THE ROOM OF THE GREAT FIREPLACE

“**S**HALL I not take mine ease in mine inn?” demands Falstaff, voicing thus a widely human appeal for comfort. And in this once-while inn there is one room peculiarly fitted either for taking ease or for working. It is that room of spacious coziness, to which distinction is given by the eight-foot fireplace.

Other rooms of the inn have loftier ceilings, and finely modeled cornicing, and proportions that are a dignified delight to the eye. But always there is the desire for the most cozy room for work or for relaxation. Why, even the stately palaces have their cozy quarters! At Versailles, the visitor sees a succession of mighty rooms—and is then pleased with the snug little corner where Marie Antoinette led her intimate life. We are all human, whether monarchs

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or Americans, and share the universal human love for coziness. And so, shall we not take our ease, or our work, in this low-ceilinged room of the inn! Falstaff loved to take his ease, so the picture of comfort is given us, in front of a sea-coal fire; but surely he would have loved a great fire of wood leaping and roaring in such a fireplace as this.

The rising sun comes in at one side of the room and the setting sun at the other. From the windows, there is first the grass, and then the light lines of stone walls, and then the trees and the mounting hills; and, inside the room, there is first a dull soft green paper, and then the light lines of the old grooved chair-rail, and, rising above this, a green paper covered with trees of a green that is darker. At the windows are curtains of white muslin, with a pattern of little white trees; the curtains being hung in the fashion followed by Martha Washington at Mt. Vernon, with a frill across the top, and side breadths falling straight at either side but not covering the glass, and all being within the casing of the window.

Within the great fireplace are a pair of iron fire-dogs, topped with heavy faceted balls. A big black iron kettle on the hearth holds some wood, but a convenient reserve supply is in the lowest of the wooden-

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doored hutches at the side of the fireplace, used originally for oven and cupboards. There is fascination in the word, as well as in a hutch itself—perhaps owing to memories of the hatched treasures that were forthcoming on a certain gay evening spent by King Richard and the Clerk of Copmanhurst---and we use the upper hutches for the laying by of other things than wood.

The erstwhile crane had disappeared, and we mourned for it, for although we could find cranes a-plenty, we could hear of none of a size sufficient for so ample a space. But at length, upon a scrap heap, a dozen miles away, the requisite crane was discerned! It was not eight feet in length; we could not hope to find one that size; but as this one had filled the entire space of a five-foot fireplace, it would stretch its single arm past the middle of ours. It was carried home in triumph. A village mason dug out a few bricks, set the crane, and solidly replaced the bricks. And the crane swung there as naturally as if it had never swung anywhere else. A few pothooks are upon it, gathered from this place and that; and a quaint little black kettle, three-legged, hangs there; and a splendid great copper tea-kettle, loaned us by a descendant of one of the early State Governors. Up the chimney, black-throated

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with the smoke of so many years, we like to hang fitches of bacon, or a ham.

There are iron tongs and a long iron poker—for the fireplace is in iron with the exception of the copper kettle and the brass nose on the bellows. About the poker there seems to hang an old-time charm. A most capable implement it is, three and a half feet in length, with oddly curved handle and still more oddly two-pronged points; and in its coat of the dull black which, for effectiveness, it is well to use on fire-irons, latches, and other pieces of iron, it looks particularly efficient, and as if it were a relic of the past. It has attracted much attention, and we have by more than one been told that it is "just such a poker as my grandfather used to have."

But it is not old. Neither did we ever see an old one like it. We had no idea of deceiving anybody. We began to use the poker as a needful makeshift till we should secure an old one, and we still use it, so serviceable it is in handling the logs, even though we have come into possession of a good old poker of equal length but with a single prong. It is not the first time, in the history of the world, that the unpedigreed has received more attention than the legitimate.

Till now, we have never told it; but this two-



“That room of spacious coziness, to which distinction is given by the eight-foot fireplace.”

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pronged poker, this "devil-stick" as it has naturally come to be called, is but a discarded net support from a tennis court!

Upon the brick face of the side wall of the fireplace is a bunch of bayonets, each with a history or association. Bound together, and with the butt-ends up, they form candle holders. Not only is this utilitarian and effective, but it follows the traditions of the old-time armies, for many a tent has been thus lighted.

Above the fireplace, in the two-foot space between its top and the ceiling, runs a hewn oak beam, and against the lower edge of this is now placed a ten-inch-wide shelf, extending the entire width of the brick facing of the fireplace. This relieves a certain bareness of aspect which would otherwise be there, and the shelf is so painted as to harmonize with the color of the brick, this end being attained by coloring it with a mixture of brown floor stain and red roofing paint. Upon this shelf, and not too crowded, is a line of pewter and glass.

An old lady, in New York, promised to fetch from her old home in an inland county, a tall lidded pewter tankard, holding about two quarts. She did so, and gave it to us, and it stands upon this shelf. It came to her by descent from the family of an ances-

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tor who was one of the "Signers," as those who put their names to the immortal Declaration are briefly and honorably termed; it is known to have been part of the household effects of about his period; it was, therefore, probably enough used by the "Signer" himself; "But," says the donor, with anxious feminine honesty, "I don't know for sure that it was his, although I know it was so near him!"

Two old pewter cups, on this shelf, came to us at the break-up of a New York family. They are of the type with glass bottoms; and one would like to fancy them as coming from those old "Border" days, when men would not drink in doubtful company, except from glass cups or cups with glass bottoms, so needful was it that they keep their companions' dirk hands every moment in view!

There are a few other flagons and mugs and platters; and there is, too, a toby. This came oddly to us. An old Irish woman, who had long worked for us in New York, was deeply interested in our acquisitions. She was an interesting compound of ignorance and intelligence, and loved to tell of how, although coming to this country in the last year of the Rebellion, she did not know that any war was in progress! She told of getting a position in a boarding house on Houston Street and of how she found

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the boarders all fighting with one another on the first night of her service, after which fight she swept up "three basketfuls of broken crockery!" It was a curious sidelight on manners and local history.

She said she would fetch to us an old thing that she had long possessed; "an old man that I keep matches in; an old man with a queer look in his eye"; and the piece proved to be this fine old toby, of the kind described by Dickens in his novel of eighteenth century London, as being "a jug of well-browned clay, fashioned into the form of an old gentleman," the said gentleman, chancing to be full of liquor, being raised "till he stood on his head on the locksmith's nose."

Beneath the shelf there is, just what should be there, an old gun; not quite an "ole queen's-arm fetched back from Concord busted," but an army piece connected with a war and a battle of a later date than the Revolution.

Here and there in the room are candlesticks, silver or brass, with candles in them ready for use, thus again placing utilitarianism to the fore. All of the candlesticks have some especial history or reason for being; and one, squat and low, heavily silverplated, with extinguisher attached, came from one of the ships of the old navy, of the days long before there

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were electric lights in the cabins. It was disposed of, with other fittings, at the breaking up of the ship, and from the friend who obtained it, years ago, it came directly to us. It is beaded with a circlet of rope, is marked with an anchor, and bears inconspicuously the initials, "U.S.N."

Beside this great fireplace, which so broadly dominates the room, and in relation to which so many things fall in place, one may always sit with pleasure, whether to read or to talk, and, when the autumn storms blow, "drink deep of the pleasures of shelter."

There are numerous old houses still to be found, containing fireplaces nearly as large as this. An acquaintance in another State possesses a house a century and a half old, in the wing of which is a fireplace of capacious width. To make it impossible for thieves to climb down and steal, he has had a wrought iron grill made to be closed every evening in front of the fireplace—efficacious, this, but far from good looking. He was evidently not familiar with tales of wonderful escapes in the old days, when political prisoners were kept for years in big rooms with big fireplaces, or it would have occurred to him that an easy way to make such a fireplace prohibitive to clamberers is to set iron bars across, firmly mortared, a little up the chimney and out of sight.

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At one side of our own fireplace room is a cedar chest, rug covered and cushioned, and facing it, across the room, is the desk. It is of good mahogany; but, after all, it is Honduras, and not of the darker and still more beautiful San Domingo. It is what would be termed a slant-top secretary, and the slanting piece unfolds down and outwards, and rests on two "stops," to make a writing surface. The desk has claw-and-ball feet, which are properly short and heavy, as they should be on such an article of furniture.

It is impossible to fix the date of this desk with positiveness, except that it is well over the century age. It appears to be of about 1770; and this, among other reasons, from the markings of the original brass handles. The handles which were on it when we obtained it are not of the same age as the desk, which is apt to be the case with the handles of old pieces. But the original markings may still be discerned, although they were filled in and polished, and they point to a style that was common about a century and a quarter ago. And, too, the drawer-fronts overlap; they extend over the drawer-openings instead of fitting entirely inside, making the face of each drawer larger than the hole that the drawer slides into; and this is another of the numer-

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ous indications which, put together, infallibly indicate age.

There is wealth of drawer and cubby hole, but no secret compartment! For that, search was made in vain. One should always examine an old desk for this, as secret compartments were not uncommon in the old days. And one may readily satisfy himself. Measure the outside dimensions; then measure each drawer and pigeonhole; and if at any part there is discrepancy, investigate there for the space. Behind the swing-door compartment which is so common in old desks, in the centre of the pigeonholes, is a favorite place for the concealed cavity, and it is usual to get at it by touching a spring and drawing the entire swing-door compartment forward like a box—whereupon the space is disclosed, behind.

When this old desk was obtained it was among our first cares to varnish, lightly, the inside of each drawer. It is well to do this with the drawers of any old piece, for it gives an assurance of cleanliness and a sense of making the piece one's own.

Extremely low book shelves occupy the greater part of the lower wall space. The floor is covered with some rugs; the large one in the centre of Oriental make, several woven of torn cloth strips, and one "hooked" in a pattern of woolen tufts. Two of the



A slant-top secretary of about 1770. The claw-and-ball feet are short and heavy, as they should be on so heavy a piece of furniture

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rag rugs were woven in colors to match the colors of the room; it is as easy to do this as to have rugs woven at random; it requires only somewhat of selection of rags and directions to the weaver as to the warp.

The chairs, as the chairs in such a room ought to be, are peculiarly for comfort and use. There is a great fireplace chair; also a chair in leather, easy, broad, rotund and low; there are a couple of Connecticut splint-bottoms from the musician's gallery of a ballroom of a century ago; for the desk there is a Windsor armchair. This, one of the household belongings of a great-grandmother, came through reasons genealogical and was sent from the other side of the Atlantic.

A peculiarity of this chair is its unusual lower bracing, a rung stretching from one front leg to the other, but sweeping far back under the chair, semi-circularly, in so doing, so as to be out of the way of the feet, and being met, at the back, by two short bracing pins, one leading to each of the rear legs.

There is a curious point to notice in the construction of this Windsor chair. Its back, instead of being of an unbroken line of spokes, has a splat down the centre (there being an extension back, there are in this case two splats, one above the other), and this

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peculiarity, of a splat in the back of a Windsor, may always be looked upon as showing that it was made in Great Britain. We have never heard of an American Windsor made in this way, nor of other collectors who have found or heard of any, and if any have been so made they are very rare.

We call this chair an "extension back." It is not that the chair-back is necessarily higher than with other Windsors, but that, to make the chair stronger, there is a hickory arm line extended around the entire back, making two sets of short spokes instead of one set of long. It was in an extension-back Windsor that Jefferson sat when he wrote the Declaration of Independence.

There is also a rocking-chair in this room; it is, after all, a kind of chair indigenous to our soil. Rockers were made in America before they were made anywhere else in the world, and it seems probable that none were made much before the time of the Revolution. Comfortable chairs that they are, one thinks with amusement of the serious-minded Thoreau striving long to make his favorite chair a thing of ease, and trying upon it one pair of rockers after another until, shortly before his death, he succeeded in getting it precisely to suit him, by making a thing which was of distressing discomfort to any one else.

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In choosing which pictures we should hang here, it was endeavored to harmonize them, not only with the spirit of the olden time but also with the characteristics of the room itself.

A few photographed Corots harmonize delightfully with the suggestion of subdued greenery in the room and with the trees and the greenery seen from the windows. Such pictures as these are of any time or all time. A Corot is always as old as Nature herself, and always as young as to-day.

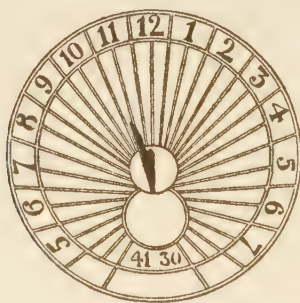
Beside the fireplace hangs a little painting of a fireplace in an ancient house; and, near by, a photograph of Mona Lisa smiles the enigmatical smile that has piqued and fascinated the centuries. Among the other pictures is an attractive old engraving of a military scene in ancient Leipsic.

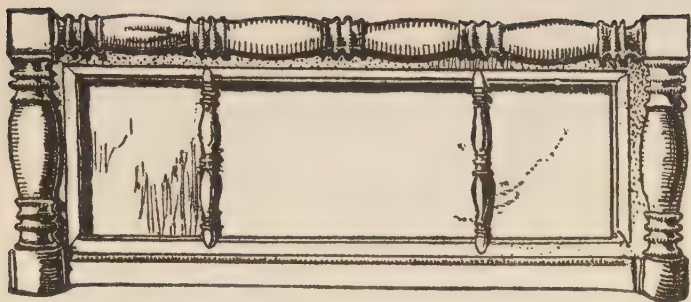
The windows look forth on a garden in which stands a sun-dial, always a thing of allurements in connection with an old house and old furniture. It should itself be old, if possible; yet even the most modern copy carries the subtle suggestion as of centuries. Our own is American, dates from early in the past century, and is fortunate in having been made for almost this identical latitude. It came unexpectedly, in the trunk of a visitor who had saved it from her father's garden and knew how highly we should esteem it.

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The charm of a sun-dial is always increased if it bears a motto on its fingered face; and it may be such an optimistic boast as, "I only mark the shining hours," or such a monitory preachment as, "The night cometh."

Yet, even though the night cometh, your sun-dial will still—with a little arithmetic—mark the shining hours of the moon as well! You have but to note the hour pointed out by the moon's shadow; then find the age of the moon, by days, in the calendar; and then take three-fourths of that number and add it, as hours, to the hour the shadow shows; and you have found the time. On the sixteenth night of the moon, therefore, the sun-dial points the time without necessitating any effort mathematical.





CHAPTER XVII

THE ROOM IN YELLOW,

POOR Deborah Franklin, while her Benjamin (who must have had admirable domestic discipline!) was in Europe on one of his extended absences, refused to put in place some pictures which needed hanging, so fearful was she of displeasing the eminent man, her husband, by driving nails in places of which his superior judgment would not approve. Many a house owner of to-day dreads the blemish of nail-holes, and yet they are not nearly so much of an injury to appearance as are the triangles of wire which reach from the pictures to a molding just under the ceiling line. It seems strange that such unnecessary and disturbing wires should be tolerated, for they are a jarring feature in any carefully-planned room.

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For our own part, we permit no marring sign of nail or wire or picture molding to appear. The wire is stretched tightly across the back of the picture, and hung upon a small wire nail, driven down at an acute angle into the wall. If driven straight in, the nail is liable to crush down in the plaster; neither does a nail driven in straight hold so great a weight as does one driven in on a downward angle. Lath and plaster will hold any ordinary picture; almost, indeed, an extraordinary one, and it is not necessary to go tapping in search of joist or scantling. The pictures are hung on what may be called the "eye line," and with nothing considered but the needs of the room and the light on the pictures.

Should it be desired to change the position of a picture, the nail can be drawn out, upward, and the hole will not be seen if it was made with a small and pointed nail; or, even if sharp eyes detect it, it does not compare as a blemish with the lines of wire which the other method of hanging tolerates in sight at all times.

Should fear be felt for the safety of a heavy picture or mirror, use a screw instead of a nail, and set it in with plaster of paris, and to this, when hard, the heaviest picture may be trusted.

The first room opening from the great old hall is

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distinctively a room in yellow, and all of its pictures are framed in simple gilt. The tall windows look out at the roadway and the triangular green, and another window looks upon the garden, but the light that comes into the room is softened by the greenery of maple trees in front and by the quivering leaves of locusts at the side.

The windows are recessed, for the walls are heavy and eighteen inches thick, and these recesses are paneled, long and gracefully, up the sides and at the tops.

Beneath the windows, between the sill and the floor, there are broad panels of wainscoting in harmony with the woodwork of the room.

The ceiling is bordered by a delicate cornice. It is of charming design, and very simple, with moldings and corner squares which repeat the moldings of the door-frames and window-frames. An engirding line of stucco traces its course along the ceiling, about nine inches from the cornice design, and has graceful ogee curves to mark the angles of the room and the projection of the fireplace.

The fine old ceiling and the walls had not passed through the years entirely unscathed, for there were holes where lamps had hung, and there was a tin pot-lid which covered a huge round space connecting with a register above, and there were sundry other

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blemishes as well. Great pleasure was it to have the ceiling and cornice carefully mended by a good workman, and the walls, after each crevice and nail-hole was smoothed, covered with a paper of rich yellow, of the shade known as Colonial. This room and the adjoining dining room—rooms almost of a size, and with the same characteristics of cornice and fireplace and windows, and opening into each other with a broad archway, fitted with sliding doors—were papered with precisely the same design. The ceilings being unusually high, a stripe was carefully avoided, and a conventional pattern chosen which, at the length of the room, merges into a plain surface. The paper runs from baseboard to cornice without border or break.

The windows have net curtains next to the glass, with one small wreath, and a margin of tape, and straight and simple folds reaching from a plain brass rod at the top, to the floor, thus defining the recess of the windows.

Handwoven curtains of dull, soft yellow were hung in the archway; and, to continue the effect, the ceiling was washed, in distemper, in a light cream.

The problem of floor covering was then to be met, and many a shop was visited and many a rug spread down, for our requirements were not precisely easy

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to meet. The rug must be large, must not be beyond a modest price, and must be in yellow or a color in harmony with that.

At last, we came across a Persian rug, which we knew was precisely the thing we sought. Its background was a dull yellow and it was thirteen feet by ten.

"I will give you this rug at a very low price," said the dealer, "if you can use it, for there is little demand for this color." And he named a price absurdly low. Thus do even the collector's requirements sometimes become a final advantage.

The brass knobs on the dark doors, the yellow upholstering of the dark furniture, a fox skin in front of the hearth, brass andirons and fire shovel, all add to the soft yellow effect of the room. And in the corner, upon a bandy-legged table, stands a jar from Palermo, of common glazed earthenware, but of perfect and ancient curves seldom found even in Italy and of a rare dull yellow hue. Something from Europe, if characteristic of the real Europe and not of the tourist trade, and if it was made naturally, a bit of metal or pottery by a handicraftsman working as his ancestors worked, and after the same models, seems old and harmonizes with the old for it has essential characteristics of age.

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There was little hesitation about the placing of furniture in this room, for it was schemed into position, in day dreams, even before paste and paint brush were used.

A sofa was naturally to be a principal piece, and we had one of Empire design.

Chippendale looked upon the sofa, which was beginning to make itself felt in England in his time, as something French, and his own most distinguished sofa, a style which it is still possible to find although extremely difficult, looks like three chairs built in a row and is really a settee rather than a sofa. At the recent dispersion of the furniture of an old Baltimore house, such a Chippendale settee was sold.

Sofas did not become common until the time of Heppelwhite and Sheraton, both of whom made extremely beautiful ones, in their respectively characteristic styles.

The early Empire furnished fine sofa designs, which were copied and adapted by the best workers in our own country.

Our sofa stands, long and hospitable, between the two front windows, and it is not so far from the fireplace as to miss the influence of the friendly glow. "What did he mean by ah-peer?" demanded Silas Lapham, of his wife, after the departure of the prig-

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gish architect ; and his question did not display an altogether unreasonable ignorance, for it is so needless, in America, to pronounce such a word in the French way.

Most old furniture puts its best feet foremost, and this sofa is like the rest, in that its front legs are elaborate wing-and-claw, while the rear legs are uncarved.

This sofa is of San Domingo mahogany, the kind of mahogany most highly esteemed by old cabinet-makers. For some years past the principal commercial source of San Domingo mahogany has been doors from old houses and leaves from old tables. West India mahogany means practically the same thing.

This kind of mahogany is heavy, weighing some six pounds to the square foot, one inch thick, and much of the Honduras and Mexican mahogany is not much more than a third as heavy, and is softer and of coarser grain.

A great deal, and probably by far the greater part, of the so-called mahogany of to-day is nothing but birch.

Mahogany has been used in furniture making for only two hundred years and came into real vogue some quarter of a century after its in-

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troduction. Its admirable texture and color, and its susceptibility to carving and polish, and its strength, won for it wide popularity in England and America. In France it also became popular, but never succeeded in displacing French walnut.

The subject of woods is an interesting one. In the United States, a hundred years ago, in addition to the familiar kinds of wood, the cabinet-makers used, largely for insets and veneers, holly and button and king and tulip wood, snake and purple and zebra wood, Alexandria and Manila wood, cedar and satin and yew (the yew was a favorite of Louis the Fourteenth, for furniture), and rosewood. This last wood came into considerable use for entire pieces in the time of Victoria, but in spite of certain good points, and its fortunate name, it is of a rather un-beautiful purplish black, not to be compared with the serene beauty of mahogany or the dignity and reserve of walnut.

The cabinet-makers who worked in such queer woods did queer things with them—or at least we might fairly suppose so on reading of their charges for plinthing and therming and dovetailing, for plowing and tonguing ends, for making cross-bands and octagons and toad-back moldings.

The piano, between the door and window, is, nat-



The Room in Yellow

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urally, not old. It is, perforce, a youthful interloper. Yet its dark wood, and perhaps a sense of the very inevitableness of its lack of an old age, make it seem entirely fitting. The imagination feels the fascination of spinet and virginal, of clavichord and harpsichord, and pictures fair women of the past lightly touching their keys. But, after all, the modern piano is more desirable than any of these, even in the eyes of the most confirmed lover of the antique. The old forms look very decorative though—and it seems that they may even be utilitarian, for there comes to mind an old harpsichord, with finely tapered legs, and distinguished appearance, which is utilized by a Savannah family for the storage of bath towels!

So far back as the close of the eighteenth century, a New York advertisement declares that “the piano forte is become so exceedingly fashionable in Europe that few polite families are without it,” and it was many years ago that the manufacture of domestic pianos succeeded importations.

Near the side window of this room, in the corner beside the arch, is the old tilting table from the Eastern Shore, with its graceful snake feet, and its great glowing disc of mahogany glimmering softly with lights from the windows and from the fire, and ready

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to be drawn forward for use as the afternoon moves toward its close.

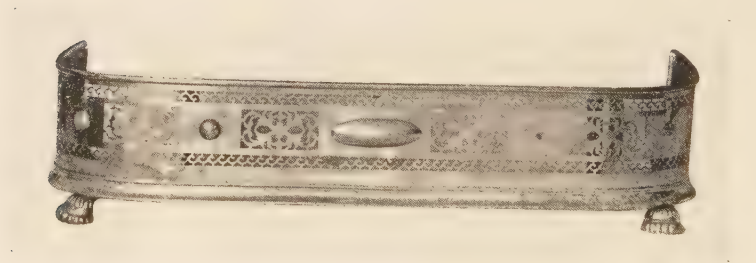
The place of honor beside the hearth is held by one of the "seats of the mighty." It is a chair, which was once the property of General Anthony Wayne at his home at Waynesborough, and came to us from a friend who had obtained it thirty years before from a certain Lydia, widow of a relative of the General. The entire furniture of the old homestead at the time of General Wayne's occupancy still remains there, the treasured possession of his descendant—except this chair, which descended collaterally and finally came our way.

It is a Chippendale, and is broad in the seat, and strong, for Chippendale designed chairs for men who wore great-skirted coats and women with full-hooped petticoats, not for fragile maidens in skimpy, high-waisted gowns or for gallants all sentiment and *incroyables*. Sheraton and Heppelwhite made chairs for these latter, so slender and delicate that few survive for our delectation.

The front legs of the Wayne chair are cabriole and end in webbed feet. The back of the chair has an enlaced splat of graceful jar shape. The spaces between this splat and the side pieces of the back are as carefully planned as is the splat itself.



A Chair owned by Anthony Wayne : a Chippendale of faultless proportions



An Open-work Brass Fender, Eighteenth Century ; found in South Carolina, thrown away, under a porch

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So well proportioned is this chair, and so perfect a specimen of Chippendale's art, that we are of the opinion that it came from the master's own workshop. Anthony Wayne was a man of wealth and prominence and position, even before the Revolution. What more likely than that he, like many other rich men, should send to London for furniture, and that, sending there, he should order from the cabinet-maker of greatest distinction, of that time. It is certain that some of Chippendale's chairs came to America.

The chair is of sober brown walnut and has come down through all these years unscathed and unharmed, for it has always been carefully cared for. The seat lifts from the frame, which shows as a margin around the upholstering. This seat was high when we first saw the chair, and was covered with a log-cabin pattern in patchwork. On removing this cover, two waistcoats of ancient cut and snuff-colored cloth came to light, capacious and many-buttoned; but not military! Under them was the original cover of the chair, a dark deep red stuff of heavy, coarse weave, with a brocade-like pattern in still deeper red. Chippendale's own words come to mind as to the best covering for such a chair: "If the seats are covered with red morocco they will have

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a fine effect," he writes, adding, "They are usually the same stuff as the curtains."

As the cover was quite worn through, and the cushion was much flattened, the seat was reupholstered. For our room, red would not do, so a piece of dull yellow silk brocade, with a small square pattern, was used. The original hair was used for padding the seat—white horse-hair, as straight as when it grew on a horse—and as many as possible of the old hand-made tacks were also replaced.

The top rail of the back of a pure Chippendale chair is a thing of beauty. On the Wayne chair it is the shape of a bow, dipping to join the splat, gently sweeping toward the sides, and ending in a slightly projecting curve at either end.

The back is exactly twenty-two inches high, which is a height spoken of as admirable by Chippendale. Just twenty-two inches is the front width of the generous seat.

The gentle art of finding Chippendales has given us, for this room, two other chairs of this design, each with straight heavy legs and graceful backs, and quite different from the Wayne chair. One of these chairs has a splat so perforated as to look like several separate reed-like pieces, rising and joining, and then spreading to meet the top rail.

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Near the fireplace is a chair of the slender-legged type of Sheraton, with a curved and crested sort of top. It might be called a Sheraton-Gothic, and is one of the many examples which remind the collector how easy it has been to combine styles, and how useless it is to attempt to classify every chair arbitrarily.

A slender-spoked Windsor, of graceful proportions, is also here. It is marked with the name of the maker, burned in, but without giving his town or State. It can be definitely traced back, however, to 1790 and to Pennsylvania.

Windsors are of considerable variety in shape, but there are always unmistakable characteristics. The curving back, of slender spokes of hickory or similar wood, is the principal distinguishing mark. The seat is always of one piece of wood and it is usually saddle-shaped. The legs, set firmly into holes bored in the wooden seat, are lathe-turned. It may almost be said that there never was an ungraceful Windsor. They are by no means among the most precious of old chairs, but they are always honored and desirable. There are a couple of Windsors in a corner of old St. Paul's in New York—and when a Colonial Society attends service there, it is a matter of jestful comment that the sexton jealously holds down one

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of the chairs and his assistant the other, so that the chairs shall be safe.

The bandy-legged table upon which stands the yellow jar, is the one which we found, as a wreck, for one dollar in Maryland. The andirons are those from Blennerhassett that were among our earliest possessions and are still among our most prized.

The pictures are mostly paintings of scenes well known and loved; one shows our old stone house environed by apple trees; another, the red-tiled roofs of the Ohio town of Zoar; another, the valley of the Seine from Meudon.

Following the admirable French idea of simplicity in furnishing the mantel, only a clock, and two tall candlesticks, and one single slim glass vase, stand there. The clock is old, with Empire case and ornaments, and has two small sphinxes, in brass, at the sides, surmounting narrow lines of brass pedestal; and the front of the case, beneath the white porcelain face, is of mahogany overlaid with curious brass arabesques.

The candlesticks are tall, being eleven inches high, and have beaded bands around the base; in two places, in the stem, they become very slim; between these slim places are concave panels, making a grace-

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ful and unusual design. They are of Sheffield plate; a treatment of silver highly valued by connoisseurs and collectors, but to a great extent superseded by electro-plating, since its discovery.

Sheffield plating, a name so important to collectors, is—one may almost say was!—an interesting process. Thin plates of silver are wired upon one or both sides of an oblong ingot of copper. The ingot is placed in a furnace so arranged that its interior can be constantly watched, for the metal must be withdrawn at the exact instant of adhesion, as fusion would otherwise take place. After the removal of the wire, the ingot is put back and forth between rollers until it has become a sheet of the required thickness. No matter how thin it is made, the relative thickness between the copper and the layers of silver is maintained. Ornamental borders, however, were necessarily plated by a separate process or were often of solid silver.

Across the mantel stands an old Empire mirror, of a kind which came into common use shortly after 1800, and of which many were made from 1810 to 1820. This measures five feet and an inch in length and two feet in height, and two upright moldings divide it into three sections of glass. Very simple in design is the whole thing, with gently swelling

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puffs in the moldings of top and sides, and without extravagance of outline or decoration.

We found this in Delaware. It had fallen from its sometime high estate, and was painted an unanimated mud color. Four dollars was the purchase price, and it was sent to a gilder's to have it put in order. There, many discouragements were offered, among them the strange idea, fixed in so many modern workers' minds, that a new mirror could be made for less money than the restoration of this old one. Finding that we did not wish a new mirror, the gilder was still very dubious about gilding the old; it would cost, he declared, at least twenty-eight dollars, and might not be satisfactory even then.

So the mirror was sent home and set up in our own workroom, where we could at least experiment with it. Scraping easily took off two coats of paint, and underneath was a surface of real gold-leaf which would make an excellent base for the new gilding.

After a little smoothing and a coat of varnish, the mirror was given a coat of bronze powder, of a good gold color, moistened with banana oil and applied with a fine camel's-hair brush an inch wide. As gold powders are of varying tints, and a quiet hue was desired, a little red and black oil color was stirred in the banana oil until, by experiment, the

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desired tone was reached. Green would have given a green hue had that been wanted. A few days after, having some powder left, the mirror was given a second coat, and following that a light coat of varnish to protect the gilt from fingermarks when dusting.

The entire thing was done for an outlay of one dollar, and the result is admirable in appearance. Perhaps it may not last as long as a bronze-gilt applied by expert hands, but it can be easily renewed, and the work of another coat would be but half an hour's task.





CHAPTER XVIII

THE OUTFITTING OF A GUEST ROOM

IT is perhaps a question, whether it shows the eternal youth of the world or its illimitable age — at least, it shows an eternally continuing similarity, in spite of vast changes in social life, household ways, habits of thought, civilization, government — that so much of the past would precisely fit to-day.

Now, look at Elisha, nearly three thousand years ago. At a place where he is staying, a local committee comes to tell him that “the situation of the city is pleasant,” but complains of the water supply. When mischievous children cry out in glee at his baldness he becomes angry, as might an irascible bald-headed gentleman of to-day. When a woman does him a disinterested favor he cynically asks her in what quarter she expects his influence in return.

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One feels in quite a modern atmosphere. And when the woman of Shunem entertains him, she offers the precise essentials of the hospitality of to-day: she welcomes him to dine, and then has him conducted to his room, having "set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick."

Thus the first recorded summary of what must needs be in a guest room was the same three thousand years ago as it is now: to give a bed and a light, and conveniences for sitting down and for the toilet.

The bed, naturally enough, is the principal feature of any guest-room. And the lover of the old wishes to have one with four high posts and a canopy top.

It is not so easy to find old four-posters as to find some other classes of furniture. When worn out, a bedstead was generally thrown away. There was no other purpose to which it could be put, and it was not often kept just for an indefinite desire of keeping, as was many an old table and cupboard and chest-on-chest.

As with so many things that look well, the inception of the four-poster did not come from any thought of looks, but of utilitarian comfort. It was highly advisable—it was practically necessary—in the raw winter climate of England or the United States, before the days of well-heated houses, to

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afford more protection to a bed than came from quilts and blankets. And the consequent four posts and curtains are so decorative that it is still a pleasure to see them.

The bed in the guest room of the once-while inn is not only of the olden time, in both age and appearance, but it possesses also the hygienic merits of the most advanced beds of to-day, having set within it an iron bed as already described.

Its four slender Heppelwhite posts are surmounted by a canopy which rises in the middle in a bow-shaped curve, so that, although the posts are but six feet high, and the canopy is therefore at that height at both the head and the foot, it sweeps up in the middle in this bow-shaped curve, giving an airy and spacious effect.

The canopy is covered with a corded cream-white French chintz, old-fashioned in appearance, in a pattern of great sunny, luxuriant roses. It not only looks well, but befits the past, as, at the period at which this bed was made, bedroom hangings included such materials as damask and fustian and chintz. "Bought my wife a chint," records garrulous old Pepys. The chintz for this bed is probably of much the same material as that referred to by Franklin, who sent from England, for bed and win-



The Heppelwhite Four-poster, draped and stripped, showing how the metal bed is used

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dow hangings, "fifty-six yards of cotton, printed curiously from copper plates."

Coverlid and valance are of the same chintz as the canopy, and so are the panels at the head and the foot of the bed, and there is a narrow box-plaited frill of chintz outlined around the edge of the canopy and fastened with brass tacks. Two or three chairs are covered with the same old-fashioned looking material, and there are box-plaited frills of it across the top of each of the three windows.

One obtains in this manner a distinctively old-time effect, and it is added to by the long white muslin curtains and the white muslin that covers the dressing-table.

The frame of the bed, undraped, is rather plain, as were by far the greater number of antique beds, they offering only shape in their framework and relying for further effectiveness upon draperies or hangings.

Although there is a scarcity of old-fashioned beds, they are still to be found, of various degrees of elaborateness or the reverse. Fortune, in the shape of a neighbor, brought us our second one the other day, with enormous posts, the neighbor offering it as a friendly gift. "But you must n't think this is much," he said, in modest disparagement; "for, to tell the truth, I paid only eighty cents for it, at an auc-

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tion, and the posts are too high for my rooms, but I know your ceilings are high enough."

And here is a suggestion for a different treatment from that of the four-poster first described. We shall set it up in the English style, like that bed which Mr. Pickwick prepared to sleep in by mistake on a certain eventful night: a bed will be set inside the posts, in such a way as to leave, inside the hanging curtains, "a little path, terminating in a rush-bottomed chair, just wide enough to admit of a person's getting into or out of bed."

Beds were held in such consideration, in past times, that it is a pity that so many collectors entirely neglect them, through not understanding that the stately frames can be used with modern springs and up-to-date adjuncts. Mary Washington willed to George her best bed, and Shakespeare, dying, grimly willed his second-best to that Ann whom, very considerably older than himself, he had married when but a lad under age.

Next to the bed, following the order for old Elisha, comes the dressing-table. In this room it is four feet six inches long, and only two feet three inches high—a comfortable, agreeable height for its purpose. Beneath the table, and out of sight behind the muslin covering, there is necessarily quite a space; and it

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is always an excellent thing to put in such a place, for hats and miscellaneous finery, two or three of those old-time, gorgeously papered bandboxes of the poke-bonnet era. An old-fashioned mahogany-framed mirror, large enough for use by one either sitting or standing in front of it, leans, from the table, against the wall.

It is probable that Elisha had some indoor ablutionary means, but, whether he had or not, the guest of to-day must not be without such facilities.

And so, in this room, there is an old square washstand, from an old home garret, and the top is so made that the washbowl fits into it.

We were fortunate in obtaining, from the aged owner of a very old house, a pitcher and bowl, of a charming soft-hued blue, without a chip or a mar upon either one of the pieces.

They are of an old-fashioned kind, made in England, and display a picture, large in the bottom of the bowl and a trifle smaller upon either side of the slender octagonal pitcher, which purports to be a view of Niagara Falls. But what a Niagara! It is given as a sort of Yosemite, with one fall above another; at one side of the larger and lower fall are some Indian wigwams, on the other bank is a massive European castle, and in the foreground, look-

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ing with awe at the falling water, stand a group of men and women fashionably costumed. But all the work is most admirably done.

Instead of coming to the inn, this pitcher and bowl came near to going in a far different direction. The aged owner said that she had no desire to keep the articles, but that her niece, "a red-headed art student, down to New York," wanted them. "But," continued the owner thoughtfully, "she never said anything about money." When the observation was made a second time, it took on the proportions of an undoubted hint—and when negotiations were complete (the owner wanted only a modest three dollars for the set!) the woman was still murmuring, "My niece never, no never! said anything about money."

It is still an amusing memory, how carefully those pieces of blue were driven home, held in the lap with possible excess and superfluity of caution.

For the stool that Elisha was given, a chair would certainly answer; but, fortunately, this room can match the literal stool, with a low cricket from an old New York house. Of the chairs, the one most prized is the old Shaker rocker which in the early days of our collecting meant so much to us.

It is not necessary to limit a room to the single



“ An old black-fronted Franklin, brass-banded and brass-knobbed ”

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Shunamite candlestick. And therefore, as a collector naturally picks up old candlesticks in a great variety of places, there are sufficient to put a pair upon the mantel and another pair on the dressing-table.

With the four-poster, and the rose-colored chintz, it was particularly needful that a corresponding air of the old time be maintained throughout, and so, for the walls, there was selected a white paper, relieved by chintz-like stripes, with a design in small pink roses and attendant greenery.

It is a cheerful, sunny room, and there is an old black-fronted Franklin, brass-banded and brass-knobbed, built within a white mantelpiece of wood.

Within the fireplace stand brass andirons, with iron feet, from an old house in Tallahassee, and above, on the wall, is a picture of Mayflower days. There are also in the room a few old-fashioned prints and six small colored prints of famous old houses.

Upon the floor are rugs, several of them woven or braided for this room, with rose or pink effect. A little care in the selection of cloth and in the choice of warp will secure whatever harmony and predominance of color may be desired. At Mount Vernon great attention was given to hand-weaving for floor-covering; and at one time Martha Washington went

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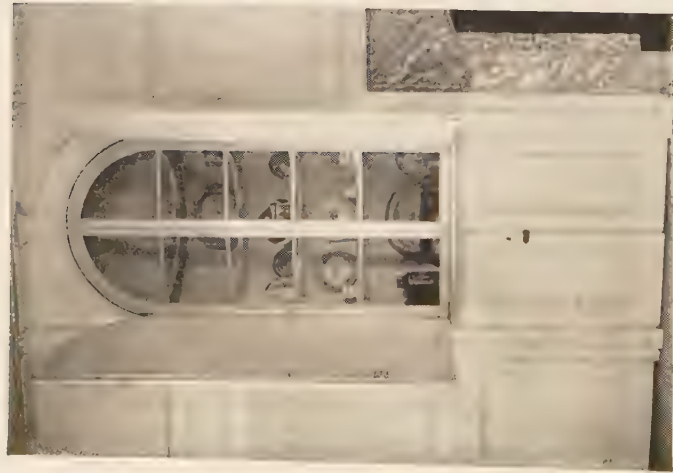
beyond this, by having some old silk gowns frayed out, spun roughly, and woven into covers for the sitting-room chairs, on the looms in her own spinning-sheds.

This guest room is the first room at the top of the stairs leading up from the broad hall; and up the stairway there is a mounting line of pen-and-ink portraits, by cartoonists, "to brighten and shorten the way." On the landing is a corner shelf with half a dozen candlesticks above and half a dozen pair of snuffers below (all old, and of various associations), ready for those setting bedward.

It has been a delight to outfit, also, the other rooms besides the guest room upon this floor: rooms, little or big, with pleasing outlook upon village street or stone-walled meadows or wooded hills.

Upon the walls of one of these rooms (it claims to be the room in which Aaron Burr slept) we found a wall-paper of old-fashioned block pattern, with white strongly predominating, but with a sprig of green flower, shaded in black, upon each block.

Tradition, local memory, village authority undisputed, declare the paper to have been put on in 1842, and it is certainly like patterns of that period. It seemed a pity to cover it—and yet there were a number of blemishes that could not be overlooked, and,



A china cupboard, or 'beautait,' built in the wainscoting

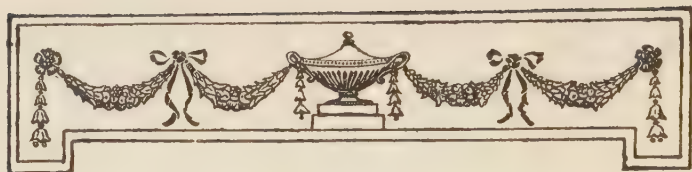


The Aaron Burr room, showing old wall-paper at the right

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of course, it was quite impossible to find any paper like it to use in repairs. But here is a stratagem which may be suggestive to others who may come upon a similar problem. Very carefully, the paper was stripped from the broad chimney-breast above the fireplace, and the fragments, cut into pieces of a shape to match the lines of the pattern, were pasted over the little holes and blemishes. There was enough to make the paper everywhere perfect in appearance: everywhere but on the denuded chimney-breast. In covering that, a green cartridge paper, of a green to match the sprigs in the squares, was found. Upon this was placed, in relief, a white garland of Georgian style. The woodwork of the room was painted white. Andirons of black iron were placed in the fireplace. Brass candlesticks were set upon the dark marble mantel. Between them is a small bust, in faience, of a sober-faced Donatello boy. And, thus retaining the old wall-paper, there seems somehow to have been retained also the subtle charm of old atmosphere and simplicity.





CHAPTER XIX

MAKESHIFTS

THACKERAY, in his delightfully reminiscent description of a room full of "old armour, prints, pictures, pipes, china (all crack'd), old rickety tables, and chairs broken-backed," tells of utilizing a Mameluke's dagger for the toasting of muffins.

So naturally does the collector turn toward expedients and substitutes that it would almost seem there must be some occult connection between things of the past and makeshifts. And it may be that some makeshifts which have come in our way may prove suggestive to other collectors, meeting unexpected problems.

Makeshifts are of two kinds: those which are intended to be permanent, and those which are for only temporary use—the latter class representing, so to

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speaking, the substance of things still hoped for and the former being an evidence of things that will not be seen.

Among our own permanent makeshifts is an arrangement for a pair of candle-brackets. Needing a light upon either side of an old dressing-glass, the proper candelabra were searched for in vain. So two hat-hooks, of brass, of the largest size—the big kind made to bolt through hat-racks—were purchased. They have quite a satisfactory curve and stand up with a good deal of dignity. They are bolted through short pieces of wood which project a little above the back edge of the dressing-table. On the top of each hook is soldered the metal end of an electric light bulb of just the right diameter for a candle. And, to provide against drip, there is slipped over each candle-holder a glass disc of the kind long made and used for this purpose.

Makeshifts are not necessarily small. On the contrary, they may be of considerable consequence. And in regard to this class it may be worth while to give an experience in the making of a makeshift fireplace. The dining room of a house in the city in which we lived just previous to adopting this old inn had two windows, both in one wall, opening on a brick-paved path and an eight-foot fence, the room

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thus being in dull shadow, with nothing to relieve its box-like quality of shape.

We possessed, to put in it, the corner-cupboard of Bethlehem, and had selected a very light yellow paper in a chintz stripe to heighten the ceiling and brighten the room. White paint and a light rug and ceiling, and very thin muslin at the windows, were materially to aid in the brightening effect.

The corner-cupboard would fill one corner—but a fireplace was needed in the other! We did not own the house. It was a matter for cogitation. And the result of the cogitation was a determination to have a fireplace, of sorts, constructed.

It was not the kind of a job to give a carpenter—unless, indeed, one could discover a carpenter with imagination. To explain the idea would give a wrong impression of something absurd or else tremendously elaborate.

Left by the outgoing tenant, in the cellar, were scrap ends of wood, a few long boards, a window sash and, most fortunate of all, and as if Fate had definitely intended it, a shelf with two heavy wooden brackets. We felt like Robinson Crusoe taking an inventory.

One evening, after paperhangers and cleaners had gone home, saw and hammer were seized, and some



“When all was done, it looked like a simple fireplace”

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of the boards were made into a sort of large framework, like a capital **H**, of the size of the corner into which the fireplace was to fit, and of just the length to reach from the ceiling to the floor. Pieces of wood were nailed, after mitering the ends, against the base of the wall, at the ceiling line, and in the centre. Then the **H**-frame was raised and nailed in place.

The shelf was then adjusted as a mantel. Boards were placed as side panels. The open space between shelf and ceiling was covered with light boards. These upper boards were then covered with pasteboard, tacked on, and all the cracks were liberally pasted over with cheesecloth. The window sash from the Robinson Crusoe pile was sawed down into a piece framing three square openings, and this was placed immediately below the mantel-shelf, and over the apparent fire space.

All was now ready for the paperhanger, and next morning, in papering the entire room, he papered right across the corner upon the boarded space above the mantel-shelf, and there was thus gained all the effect of a regularly covered wall. The panels on either side of the fire opening were painted white. A line was marked to indicate the hearth limits, and then, to secure a hearth-like aspect, melted glue was

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spread over the space and, before it dried, fine brown sand, obtained at a bird store, was thickly whisked over it with a broom. There was thus obtained the appearance of a hearth of sandstone.

Blue and white tile were fitted into the space in the section of once-while sash. The space behind the fire opening was so boarded in as to look like a fire-back, and this apparent fire-back was first painted red to resemble brick, next blackened with stove blacking and soot, and then, for a parting touch, whitened with gray soot, taken from the range flue and thrown against it—indicating intense heat!

Hickory sticks were piled within the fire space upon brass andirons. The mantel-shelf was given a few old pewter tankards to hold. A picture was placed on the apparent chimney-breast. And when a plate-rail was made to take in the corner fireplace in its course around the walls, the status of that fireplace as a fundamental part of the room was forever established.

And, when all was done, it looked like a simple, capable, well-proportioned fireplace; and never was there a single visitor who doubted that it was real and had always been there.

It was also in that house that a problem in regard to lighting apparatus presented itself. In a promi-

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nent place was a chandelier of fairly good shape, except as to the four arms and the globes. To remedy this, a hint from an old church was acted upon. The tips and the globes were taken off, and four straight white porcelain candles, of the sort made to allow the gas to pass through them and burn at the tops, were put on. They looked precisely like four wax candles. Thus was secured a good-looking chandelier of candles, with the light of gas.

Since coming to the old inn we have had various opportunities to use makeshifts, and quite a number of things have been adapted to some use more or less different from their original one.

A bellows possessed the advantages of age and shape, but that of usefulness was rather diminished by its being without a brass tip. But how easily the lack was remedied by using the nozzle of a piece of worn-out hose!

Two of the wooden doors beside the eight-foot fireplace were without handles; so, upon one was placed an ancient wrought-iron latch, found in the garret of a house built by Louis the Eleventh; and, from the other door, there now faces out, as a handle, the wrought-iron head of a lion, made for the end of a water pipe in an ancient garden. For fireplace woodboxes old kettles of iron or of brass are used.

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The porch at the side of the house was bare of railing or banister. Two long straight-backed settees from an old ball room were fitted and fastened there, and at once there was not only a railing but an attractive set of seats from which to view the orchard, the trees and the hills.

The kitchen was rather short of cupboards, and, to supply what was needed, an old-fashioned secretary was set up in a corner, with drawers below and doors above. The shelf where the writing-slab folds back upon itself gives no suggestion of being a desk in its kitchen surroundings; it is merely a convenient narrow shelf, midway up the side of the cupboard. There were no handles on the piece when it came to us, and we put on handles of white porcelain. It now looks precisely like a capable kitchen cupboard, and is eminently useful.

For one of the upstairs rooms, an old cupboard, tall and of severe plainness of aspect, was made into an attractive wardrobe by the use of brass knobs for handles, and some white paint. In this same room stands a mahogany dressing-table, with the old glass whose setting of little drawers and swivel posts fitted the mirror so opportunely. Instead of placing the glass on top of a chest of drawers or on a muslin-covered dressing-table, a plain mahogany ta-

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ble was used, and a complete article of furniture in mahogany was thus formed.

A most successful adaptation in silver is owned by a friend in the shape of two fern-dishes, four-footed, oval, of silver, and of old-fashioned workmanship, with a two-inch openwork rail. He showed a soldered hole in the bottom of each dish. "Yes; old cruet-stands. I had the handles sawed off—and there you are!"

It is impossible to offer much definite advice in regard to makeshifts, for it is seldom that the circumstances of any two cases are precisely the same.

Napoleon once wished a chemical experiment made immediately, in his presence. "But I have no pestle or mortar!" lamented the chemist. Instantly Napoleon was in a heat of impatient anger. "Remember, sir," he said sternly, "that every table-top is a mortar and every chair-leg a pestle!"





CHAPTER XX

FAKES: HOW TO RECOGNIZE AND AVOID THEM

IT was long ago remarked, sagely, that the world is given to lying, and it is not charging the sellers of old furniture with more than the average of tergiversation to suggest that some of them make misrepresentations; although many a piece is precisely what it is claimed to be, and many another is offered honestly upon its merits, of which the buyer must judge.

As to date and history, there are peculiar temptations toward misstatement. Many buyers attach so much higher a value to an article with a history that the manufacture of imitations with fine old dates cut on them is quite an industry. It is a particularly barefaced kind of imposition.

And yet, dates are by no means always to be doubted. Sewall, he of diary fame, in getting a

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chest for each of his children, had each chest marked with the date of the youthful owner's birth.

In learning to discriminate between the genuine and the imitation the old-furniture collector comes to see that there is much to consider and that constant watchfulness is necessary.

Here is a rule which, in buying, gives a sense of security. It is:—If less is paid for an antique than it could be made for, it must needs be genuine.

But, after the buyer is satisfied as to the age, he may very properly pay much more than the cost of making, on account of considerations of rarity or shape.

The danger of being imposed upon is further minimized by buying articles that have not been restored. It is safer to buy them worn and unrepaired, and to have the mending and polishing done afterward.

Entering, one day, an antique shop in an old Massachusetts town, we were told by the clerk that the proprietor was in the workroom behind. But it proved to be an inopportune time, and he was distinctly embarrassed, for he was putting the finishing touches to a fine Chippendale chair. He grinned with a sort of sheepish defiance, and said: "At any rate, I made it out of the wood of an old tree, and so

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it will really be an old chair. And I 'll stain it to look like mahogany!"

An acquaintance, who possesses and highly prizes a supposedly ancient Chippendale of beautiful design, has not noticed, or at least has not drawn a deduction from the notice, that there is yellow in the gleam of the wood at the edges of the arms, where touching and handling have already begun to wear away the polish and the artificial stain. The chair was bought at the sale of some studio effects, but the buyer should not only have observed that the wood was not so heavy as good mahogany ought to be, but ought to have been suspicious of the deep red color, for it pointed infallibly to imitation or at least to mahogany ill-treated.

With oak, deceit is often attempted. From two hundred to three hundred years ago, oak was what was most commonly used for furniture; but, of that early period, it is seldom that a veritable piece is found, outside of museums; hence the temptation to counterfeit.

There are various methods of darkening new oak to the color and appearance of old; a curious one is to use a wash of old iron in hot vinegar, to give the requisite hue, before the piece is polished; or acids and stains and fumes may lend their aid. Another



Empire Console, bought in 1907, in New Jersey, for one dollar



Low-boy of 1750, with Cabriole Legs and Original Brasses, from a cellar
in Connecticut

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method is to coat new-made oak furniture with paint, and then remove the paint, in patches, with potash. And, for the worm-holes that are so often found in the genuine articles, of different woods, they are looked upon by many as such indubitable signs of age that, to meet the demand, they are sometimes put into new wood, one method of perforation being with very fine drills.

An acquaintance called one evening to inquire what we did to our old chairs and things when they had worm-holes, and he explained that he had acquired an old worm-eaten desk upon which he wished to apply the remedy immediately. We tried to laugh a little at the enthusiasm which would not permit another night of life to worms which had been at work for decades, but the inquirer was a new and very ardent collector.

We told him to scrape, where the worm-holes were, to the bare wood, and with a brush dose all the holes with corrosive sublimate. We also suggested that where fuzz showed at a worm-hole a thin wire would sometimes drag out the worker. Being a doctor, he got corrosive sublimate without difficulty, and next day we went over to see his prize.

The desk was of shapely Empire design, but the

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brasses were oval plates that did not belong with it. However, new brasses are often put on old pieces. But the thing looked wrong. The drawers, pulled out, showed great spills of ink and general duskiness. That is a master-stroke of the artful reproducer. Spilled ink within desk drawers is looked upon as the sign and symbol of extreme age—it is offered as proof positive of antiquity—when, as a matter of fact, a drawer is one of the last places where ink would by any reasonable chance be spilled. The corners of the drawers were telltale. The dovetailing suggested machinery, being as even as the corner of a starch-box.

And, somehow, the purchaser's pride seemed to have waned. Then, with a smile, came the words: "That sublimate wash is a good thing. I think the worms are pretty dead, now. Here 's one I dug out with a wire!" And he displayed an infinitesimal bird-shot.

The blow was fatal to his collecting. Within a week his Morris chair was dragged again into light and he planned to "do" his dining room in Mission furniture. His dream of Empire was past.

One of the things to be looked upon with suspicion is the finding of an old document, to the dealer's intense surprise, in a secret drawer.

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Old methods of dovetailing are seldom followed in reproductions. Look with doubt upon bureaus and desks whose brasses point to previous to 1770 but whose drawers can be pushed in instead of being stopped by projecting edges. Preserve a cautious attitude toward pieces which, although in the main new, have had old parts grafted on them. Ornaments and carvings, in relief, may be reproductions made by filling a mould with mahogany sawdust and glue, under pressure; the mixture will take a polish, but has not the texture of the genuine wood.

But, after all, buyers deceive themselves more often than sellers intentionally deceive them. And the collector will meet with quite as much honest misrepresentation as dishonest—misrepresentation based upon mistaken family tradition or upon ignorance of styles.

A dear old lady in Massachusetts prizes among the chief of her household possessions an ancestral bed "in which Washington once slept." She is absolutely sure of this, and it would be needlessly cruel to say anything to the contrary to her; but, alas! the combination of twisted rope and pineapple and acanthus leaf points to a period when Washington was "dust and his good sword rust." It may be added that the acanthus leaf, when found alone, although

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it is usually associated with Empire, is an old ornamentation as well, it being of the Renaissance.

Family tradition, no matter how honest, how sincere, must always be received with caution. Even an unbroken tradition is never strong as to precise dates. Under the merging influence of time, centuries are blended and decades imperceptibly melt into one another. Many a piece of furniture of not more than one hundred years in age is held by family tradition to be "over two hundred and fifty years old."

But if, for example, tradition has it, unbrokenly, that certain furniture was part of a wedding outfit of a certain couple, then the chances are that tradition is true, and, without trusting to that for the date, the time of the wedding may be looked up in some record and the age of the furniture thus fixed.

A friend who lives in a charming old Italian villa feels no doubt that the furniture is of the period of 1702, not only because there is every sign of age, but because tradition has it that the furnishings were part of the original furnishings of the villa, and the records declare that the house was built in 1702.

More than anything else, a collector comes to cultivate plain common-sense in examining old furniture; he judges largely, of course, by his know-

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ledge of makes and styles, but he also weighs not only the statements of the would-be seller, whether he be a professional dealer or a simple householder, but also the probabilities of correctness, as gathered from the seller's personality, manner, and surroundings, and the likeliness of his really knowing the actual truth. And as experience and observation widen there comes a sort of intuition, a sixth sense, upon which one must learn to rely.

Too much credulity and too great a readiness to doubt are alike to be avoided.

When your old brass andirons totter and fall apart when a fire is built, and you see a stream of white solder on the hearth, do not too rashly decide that you have been deceived, for many a pair of genuine old andirons, in which the central interior rod has been worn out by time, has been repaired with solder instead of by blacksmith's work.

A genuine letter from South Carolina, offering some old chairs and slender-legged card-tables, was shown year after year by one antique dealer to explain the source of supply of a line of old pieces which was kept constantly replenished from the workshop. The glamour of that letter removed doubt from the minds of a long series of purchasers of "those dear little Carolinian tables and chairs."

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Proprietors of the elaborate old-furniture shops study closely the pictures of furniture in the various collections, and also the descriptions given in books on furniture.

In a recent book, one of the pictures was that of a beautiful mirror with its principal ornament missing. The author described the mirror in terms of high praise and suggested that the missing ornament was probably of gilt and urn-shaped. And already some of the large shops offer a "veritable antique" precisely similar to that picture except that the missing ornament, richly gilt and of urn shape, is triumphantly in place.

There are many Empire chests of drawers in existence that are spurious, and some of them are made ingeniously by splitting Empire bed-posts and using the pieces as pilasters on the front corners of very plain and simple chests of drawers. As many as sixteen pilasters can be had from one old set of high posts.

The vaulting ambition to deceive sometimes o'erleaps itself, as when genuine old Windsor chairs of hickory or ash are taken in hand and masqueraded into mahogany, so that a better price can be obtained. It is probably safe to say that no old Windsor chair was ever made in mahogany; certainly, if

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there ever were any, they were very few; mahogany was never deemed a good wood for the Windsor bendings.

The grain of different woods can easily be learned—at least, that of oak, and also that of nut woods, such as walnut. These, no matter how they are dyed or stained, still retain some characteristic which should never allow them to be mistaken for mahogany.

A pillar which shows the flowerlike flames of mahogany is necessarily veneered, and the line where the veneer joins can be found; yet many a prospective purchaser of a table whose pillar shows a flaming glow and a fine pattern in the grain such as are found only in quarter-sawed wood, is assured that it is solid mahogany.

Dutch marquetry, in really beautiful pieces, is to a considerable extent sold nowadays; and more than once we have seen it described as “old” Dutch marquetry. Some of it may be old, for there was a great deal of fine marquetry made in the old days; but in the Holland workshops marquetry in old patterns is now turned out in large quantities. Much of it is highly desirable in shape; the only defect is a possible tendency not to stand the steam heat of American houses, there being a great number of lit-

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tle pieces fastened on with glue. If the buyer does not look for age and history and association there is no reason why it should not be bought.

“Old Dutch” is by common acceptance supposed to imply the Colonial period of Stuyvesant and Van Twiller and other Knickerbocker worthies, and so one is apt to consider “old Dutch silver” to be quite antique. There is, of course, genuine old Dutch silver still obtainable; but it is something that lends itself readily to reproduction; and the market for it being great, and purchasers being very willing to believe in its genuineness, there are, for example, more veritable old Dutch chatelaine bag-clasps for sale in New York than all the ladies of Amsterdam ever possessed. An officer of the Dutch army who knows a great deal about old silver, and has a fine collection, especially rich in the quaint silver toys now so rare, has told us that little really good old silver is now to be had in his country, and that the making of reproductions is a recognized industry which deceives only the stranger. In the American market a piece of sixteenth century or seventeenth century Dutch silver is most probably only a copy, made in Holland, of a design of that period.

And as for windmills and “Apostles” upon spoons — of course, there are originals, but such things grow



Little Tables of Ancient Make

1 Tea-table with raised rim and snake feet. 2 Tilting table with "fire-screen" top. 3 Traded for a Brahma hen. 4 Tilting table of 1825. 5 A slender candlestand of 1770. 6 Heppelwhite work-table, inlaid in lines

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on silverware in America much oftener than they did long ago in Germany and the Netherlands.

A curious industry, which was never intended in its early days to possess any misleading trait, flourishes on the East Side of New York. The little shops of Russian Jew copperworkers began to be known, a few years ago, to a constantly widening public. The little dark rooms, where handicraftsmen work at forges just as their forefathers worked in Russia, began to be visited by wondering purchasers of the brasswork. People went away, telling of their prizes in "old copper." The number of these shops rapidly increased. The dealers soon found that Americans wished to believe that what they bought was old; that visitors must have the ancient, "brought from Russia," with some far distant place of manufacture definitely proved by a hieroglyphical Hebrew mark.

It is really admirable work, most of it, in samovars and platters and candlesticks, and there is a small proportion of the really old—but if you have a dealer's confidence he will tell you that little of this really old goes to visiting buyers or to the up-town shops that have begun to handle these wares.

When a public exhibit of old furniture is permitted to give incorrect information, it is peculiarly un-

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fortunate. In this respect Philadelphia has several sins to answer for. In the collection of the oldest Philadelphia library is a grandfather's clock that is said to have been the property of Oliver Cromwell. This belief is based upon the tradition that the auctioneer who sold it, a half-century after Cromwell's death, declared that it had once been the Protector's. A slight enough basis, this, for the perpetuation of such a claim! Surely, never before or since was auctioneer's careless boast so honored!

One feels at once a sense of annoyance and incredulity, and then wonders if there is no way of settling such a question. And there is. For the name of the maker of the clock is upon it, and, from the records of the association of clockmakers it is learned that he did not finish his apprenticeship and reach the dignity of maker until after Cromwell's death.

In examining this or other clocks, it is well to remember that long pendulums were not applied to clocks until nearly 1660, that a paper calling attention to an improved pendulum was read before the Royal Society ten years later, and that not until about 1680 did pendulums begin to be commonly made in London. Short pendulums came in at a still later day.

In the same collection is a fine old desk, once Wil-

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liam Penn's. It is genuine; but incorrect restoration put upon it the bonnet-top of a later period, and not until after many years of exhibition, and of giving a wrong impression of style, did the management, very recently, have the incorrect top taken off.

In the extremely valuable Girard collection is a desk, with a music-box concealed in its top, upon which one plainly reads the date, "1795." But it is of a style not made until into the 1800's, and the observer is at once unsettled and disturbed. It is only with difficulty, the desk being in the centre of a railed-off section, that some small lettering can be made out to the effect that it is the music that is of the date of 1795!

Philadelphia is not the only place to show such mistakes of knowledge or judgment, for in the collection at Mount Vernon a beautiful chair of Louis the Sixteenth is marked as being of the seventeenth century.

The collector, seeking to add to his own treasures, must be watchful in regard to "improved" pieces. The improvements may be highly admirable, but, even if so, he should see that no wrong impression of date is given by them and that they are not permitted to enhance the price unduly. "All things are not what they seem; skim-milk masquerades as cream;"

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and so fine inlays are set deceptively into otherwise plain fronts, and homely board doors are replaced by doors of latticed glass, and ormolu mounts give distinction to the undistinguished, and gorgeous handles supersede wooden knobs, and cabrioles take the place of straight legs upon many a chair and secretary—all to the confusion of the unwatchful.





CHAPTER XXI

FINDS IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

MANY has been the odd bit of information given by the old Austrian, he who fought at Solferino, but none so strange as what came one day in response to a comment that he never handled silver.

He could not afford it, it would lock up too much money, he said; and then an oddly benign look came into his eyes. "I will tell you where to go"; and he gave an address in the heart of the busiest section of the East Side, a part of New York where an important shop of that kind would not be looked for. It was, he added, little known as a silver headquarters, except to the trade.

The place proved to be a sort of clearing house for silver for the pawnshops of New York. In a long glass case were bundles upon bundles of thin old spoons and rat-tailed spoons, and queer punch la-

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bles and huge foreign forks. On the wall, behind glass doors, were shelves upon which larger pieces were stored. And there, in a row, were four pieces of early Georgian silver, with ebony handles.

They were fine and low, and plain except for a band of little oval panels in relief. Every line in them was a delight. They showed a row of hall-marks sufficient to fascinate any collector.

We were offered them by weight—Georgian silver by weight!—and for less than silverware of modern workmanship would command on Broadway; only eighty-five dollars. The hall-marks were copied for the pleasure of looking them up in Cripps; but it was necessary to think over the price a little, and they were gone on our return. Old treasure must be snapped at in such a place; not dawdled over as when one buys in fine surroundings at fine prices.

The clerk seemed to share our disappointment. Most of their customers, he said, were dealers. He had sold the Georgian silver to a little shop off Fifth Avenue.

He also added that his stock was low—this in spite of full cases!—for eight thousand dollars' worth of old silver had just been sent to New Orleans to stock up the antique shops for the Mardi Gras crowds of strangers.

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Delicious, this! and explanatory too, for we have seen "old New Orleans silver" which the owners had purchased in that city and "knew to be French" in spite of hall-marks which they ought to have known were English.

Always is the pleasure of a find increased by the fillip of unanticipation. As when we found, one day, quite by accident, that in another part of the East Side is located a company that makes a specialty of tearing down old buildings, and offers for sale wreckage of every conceivable kind, including—what a chance for the possessor of some old house which needs restoration!—mantels and chimney-pieces, fluted pillars, mahogany doors, and fan-lights.

One day, the janitor of our apartment house, mending something about the lock of an inside room, remarked that we seemed to have considerable old-time furniture. "Down in the basement," he went on, "there is an old-fashioned looking table that my wife wants me to split up and throw in the furnace. It 's only in the way. I don't know anything about it, but it has lion's feet and eagle's wings. I 'll sell it to you for a dollar if you want it."

This was one of those chances that are not to be neglected. Of course, the table might be worth

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nothing at all except for its otherwise predestined fate of firewood; but almost anything in furniture is worth the chance of a dollar.

“I’ll take it; just fetch it up, please.”

And in a few minutes it was in the room; an Empire table, with a swing-and-fold top thirty-six inches by thirty-six, and with splendid claw feet and wings. It is of superb San Domingo, with an upright pillar showing remarkable fire and glow. And offered and bought and delivered for just one dollar! It needed somewhat of polishing—but what of that! Since then, we have been offered fifty dollars for it, by a dealer who held the money temptingly. But we considered that, although we might have other opportunities of getting fifty dollars, we might never again have the chance of getting such a superb old table in the very heart of New York City.

A friend had often heard her mother tell, with regret, of old pieces of furniture which had been practically or literally given away, many years before, and at length she began to think seriously of it all. She learned into what household most of the things had gone; she knew that they went not as precious bits but as cast-offs; and, visiting there, she learned that the people would be keenly gratified to receive new pieces of modern make in place of the now bat-

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tered antiques. An arrangement was thereupon made, highly satisfactory to both!

That was in Ohio. Now, here is an incident from New York. The granddaughter of one of the early vice-presidents felt a strong desire to recover some of the ancient family furniture, which, before she was born, had been scattered at a public sale, on the removal of her grandfather from one city to another. She made careful inquiry but could only find trace of a certain set of three tables, which had been purchased by a family whose address she learned. She went there, although it involved something of a journey. She found the descendant of the purchaser using the tables. The case was explained; the granddaughter said that she would dearly like to possess some of the furniture which had belonged to her distinguished ancestor, but that she did not wish, of course, to take away anything which the present possessor particularly prized. Whereupon the three tables were sold to her, with ready cheerfulness, for precisely the sum which, according to an old family record, had been paid for them so long before.

The finding of brass or iron treasure on a farm junk pile, or forgotten upon a high ledge in a barn, can scarcely be classed among the unexpected, for the experienced collector comes to consider such

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places as natural nooks for forgotten door-handles, cranes, and odds and ends.

But when a friend of ours, in Ohio, discovered a fine bit of pewter, a platter, of English make, so little thought of that it had become the dinner dish of a wheezy pug, that may fairly be ranked among the unexpected.

We ourselves had an interesting experience along to some extent similar lines. An ancient handicraftsman, in ancient Padua, was eating his dinner, in a corner of his very dark little shop, from a really good pewter plate with a beaded edge. He wanted but a trifle for it, and it became ours, and is one of the pieces of pewter upon the long shelf above the eight-foot fireplace, maintaining its claim to distinction as a piece of old Italian make and as coming direct to our hands from the hands of an old man in one of the most fascinating of all cities.

One of the strangest experiences was that of a friend in a charming region of New York State.

Upon inheriting a beautiful old house, long antedating the Revolution, he looked through it, and, getting to the garret, saw that it was pretty well filled with apparent rubbish which he ordered to be cleaned out. He had not, at that time, acquired a taste for antique shapes; he was, on the contrary,

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well satisfied with what is colloquially known, in New York City, as the style of Louis Fourteenth Street.

His old servant, inherited with the estate, and holding great respect for the family and its traditions, respectfully hinted that there were old pieces of furniture among the apparent trash. But the new owner was indifferently inexorable, and the garret was emptied.

But mark the sequel. Years passed. The liking for the antique came upon our friend. He saw a great light, so to speak. He loathed what he had once loved and loved that to which he had once been indifferent. He determined to set about making his home the visible sign of the inward grace that had newly come to him. And he lamented in sackcloth and ashes that the family pieces he had once had in his very possession were no longer there to form the nucleus of the collection that he was now bent upon securing.

The faithful old servitor heard his master expressing vain regrets. His dark face glowed with happiness. His old eyes sparkled. He led his wondering employer to the loft above the wood-house, and there most of the treasures still were! Moth and rust had not corrupted nor had thieves stolen. They

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had been kept all those years, through the dumb faithfulness of the old servant. And the tale has been told us in that very house, and in the midst of the things thus strangely preserved.

An acquaintance owns a fine old pair of brass andirons; and she loves to tell how she became the possessor of them. She had, for years, longed to visit her early home in the Western Reserve, and at length was able to do so. She went to the old house; she roamed through the rooms which she had not seen for thirty years but which were still strongly fixed in her memory. At night, she sat in front of where a fireplace had been—where, indeed, it still was, but boarded in with a heavy frame.

She told of a splendid pair of andirons, “rights and lefts,” of brass, which had been used in that fireplace in her girlhood. They had gone, so the people told her; everything of that sort had been cleared away long ago. Yes; it was too bad; for if they had known that anybody cared for that sort of thing—But everything had gone. And, to give ocular evidence of the changed aspect of the denuded fireplace, the heavy frame was moved aside—and there, seeing the light of day for the first time in a quarter of a century, were the andirons!

A friend—the same one that took the pewter plat-

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ter from the lunching dog—thought that she would like to secure some old sporting prints from an aunt in the country. So thitherward she went, armed with a bundle of towels of fine linen on the chance that a trade might be welcome.

But, alas! the prints had disappeared years ago. The original frames had been preserved, but not the pictures. Within the frame had been placed prize oleographs from one of the popular religious weeklies.

She was disappointed; but she gave the linen towels, just the same, mentioning, with a laugh, to her aunt, what she had had in mind to propose. The aunt was full of regrets. She was so sorry that the pictures had gone. She could not even remember what had been done with them. But she insisted that her niece should at least take the frames! This was embarrassing, but unavoidable; and then, at home, the sporting prints were found, for they had never been removed and were merely covered by the oleographs!

We know of a fine old silver spoon which was dug up, one day, in a garden patch! And, more unexpected than that, was the discovery by ourselves, one day in a boarding house in New York, of a charming Sheraton table. We were placed, on entering the

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dining room, at a little individual table at one side, where were the only unoccupied seats. The table was covered with a table-cloth which hung nearly to the floor. Something about the oval shape, and the proportions of the top, attracted us; and one of us reached under and felt the leg. It was slender and square and delicately grooved! After dinner, an examination was made, and the table was found to be a delightful example of old-fashioned Sheraton. Its oval shape came from two tiny leaves. A drawer, with original brasses, was at either end. The proprietor of the house had no idea that the table was anything more than ordinary, and it had been picked up just to be used as a handy table for a small space.

“What do you think Mrs. W— has in the storage bin in the cellar!” exclaimed our across-the-hall neighbor, one day, in New York. “She ’s got a silver salver as large as a table-top!”

Having an acquaintance with Mrs. W—, we spoke of the tray, mentioning our interest in old-fashioned things.

It was an heirloom; almost all that had been saved from the dispersion of the family effects at her girlhood home in Tennessee. It was a salver of enormous size; a really superb piece. It was of Sheffield plate, with a border of grapevine leaves,



An eighteenth-century, brick-paved, wainscoted hall, showing a Windsor chair with a desk arm



“Crosswise on the wagon was an ancient claw-foot sofa”

FINDS IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

and stood on tiny low feet, just enough to raise it from the table-top or sideboard to avoid marking the woodwork if a hot dish or teapot were upon it. A strange thing, and a strange history, for the cellar of a New York apartment house!

In a Western city, one Sunday afternoon, passing the shop of a carpenter, a glimpse was accidentally caught of what seemed to be a fine old table. It was small, but the corner of it that was visible pointed to age and workmanship. It being Sunday, no one was there; but a visit the next day showed that the table was indeed old, and it now has a place among our honored belongings, after being discovered by such a mere chance in a Western carpenter shop, where it would certainly not have been looked for.

And this is remindful of an important hint; something that all good collectors ought to know. That is, that the shop of the village undertaker, in many an Eastern town, and especially where the undertaker is a cabinet-maker as well, is a place never to be neglected in a local search.

It comes about most naturally. Often, a death means the breaking up of a household and the dispersion of the household belongings. And in such a case, who but the undertaker has the first chance!

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And too, when there is but little ready money, which is often the case where there has been a death in a village family, the undertaker is willing to take his pay in furniture. Especially, as we have noted, if he be a cabinet-maker as well!

A friend, admiring the great sofa that we obtained in a Pennsylvania town, begged us to accompany him on a trip there. He wanted a sofa, too. We said that the person from whom we had bought ours was selling nothing more, and that, anyhow, he had no other large sofa. But our friend was persistent. In such a town as we described, so he declared, there must be another fine sofa ready to be secured! And, unwilling to cool such enthusiastic faith, we went with him.

This time, we led the way to the undertaker, for in other towns we had come to know the invaluable secret of what a country undertaker is apt to have.

Nor did he disappoint us. He cogitated. He grew grave. There had been a death, he said, in his solemn voice; and if we would but wait an hour till he could see—? There was certainly a sofa—“And the bereaved” (he mumbled, respectfully, as he spoke this last word) “might possibly—” And shortly we had the satisfaction of seeing him set out.

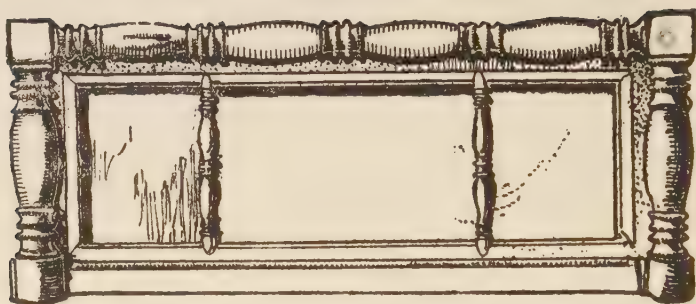
Within the hour he returned. His progress up the

FINDS IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

village street had all the effect of a triumph. It was raining, but he heeded not. He had often driven in the rain. His long and ancient coat, folded discreetly about him but drooping from the wet, his rusty, high hat, his long black wagon and his sedately stepping old black horse, all gave dignity and solemnity to his progress.

And placed crosswise on the wagon, and reaching far out on either side, was an ancient claw-foot sofa, proudly sweeping the width of the narrow street!





CHAPTER XXII

THE END OF IT ALL

THE smack of age, the relish of the saltiness of time; it is this which is so delightfully associated with the old. The love for things of the past has in all ages exerted its appeal; the fascination of the old is perennial and imperishable. The attraction of the "fine last-century face" appealed to Charles Lamb, just as things of his own time appeal to us. Savage old Bajazet loved, in his moments of relaxation, to examine tapestry depicting ancient history. Generals, statesmen, artists, the average man and the average woman, all alike are susceptible to the allurements of bygone days. And in no respect is a love for things of the past more justified than in the desire to possess stately and beautiful and charming furniture of the olden, long-past time.

THE END OF IT ALL

Stately and beautiful and charming—in this lies the important point. The furniture which one is to gather should have grace or beauty or dignity, or all three. Age alone is always sufficient to arouse interest; but age alone is not enough to justify permanent possession. Naturally, the older a piece is, the less does it positively demand other attractions. Henry James has somewhere remarked that the very old can never look quite vulgar. Yet Methuselah pieces, notable for years alone and with no other justification for being, should be avoided.

Gather things which it will be a restful delight to look upon. Gather, too, for use. Each article of furniture should be both charming and indispensable. And, so far as possible, strive for harmony of effect. Let each piece be in the fit and proper place to add to the general impression.

It is upon the heedful observance of points such as these; points which seem to be of self-evident importance but which are far too often unheeded; that the good appearance of a home depends.

And do not overload. If you can properly use but a single sofa, do not get two, unless the second one is a rarer prize and you are to discard the first. For you are furnishing a home with furniture to live with; you are not filling a museum, to be walked

THE QUEST OF THE COLONIAL

through with perfunctory stares. The attainment of sweetness, charm, propriety, proportion, ease, happiness—that is what old furniture is for!

We speak only as having attempted, as knowing that others can easily do all and more than all that we have done; but we speak out of an experience which tells what happiness goes with old mahogany.

And as we sit here, in front of our great fireplace, with the yellow light glowing gently through the shading trees and into our windows, thoughts come of our many adventures in quest of the quite Colonial. These rooms are very pleasant to walk through, very pleasant to live in; and it is a delight to see and to use the graceful, charming old-furniture triumphs of the past with which we have furnished them.

Old friends, old flowers, old furniture—always the same delight and charm. It is not that we have had any unusual success as gatherers of the old; it is not that our specimens would be considered first prizes in the great collections. But that is precisely the point! We are not telling how to form the great collections. We are but telling how any one may go forth and, with perseverance and enthusiasm, find delightful old bits of mahogany and walnut and

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china and brass and bear them home in triumph.
And into life there comes a new and delightful savor,
with this smack of age and this relish of the saltiness
of time.



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